

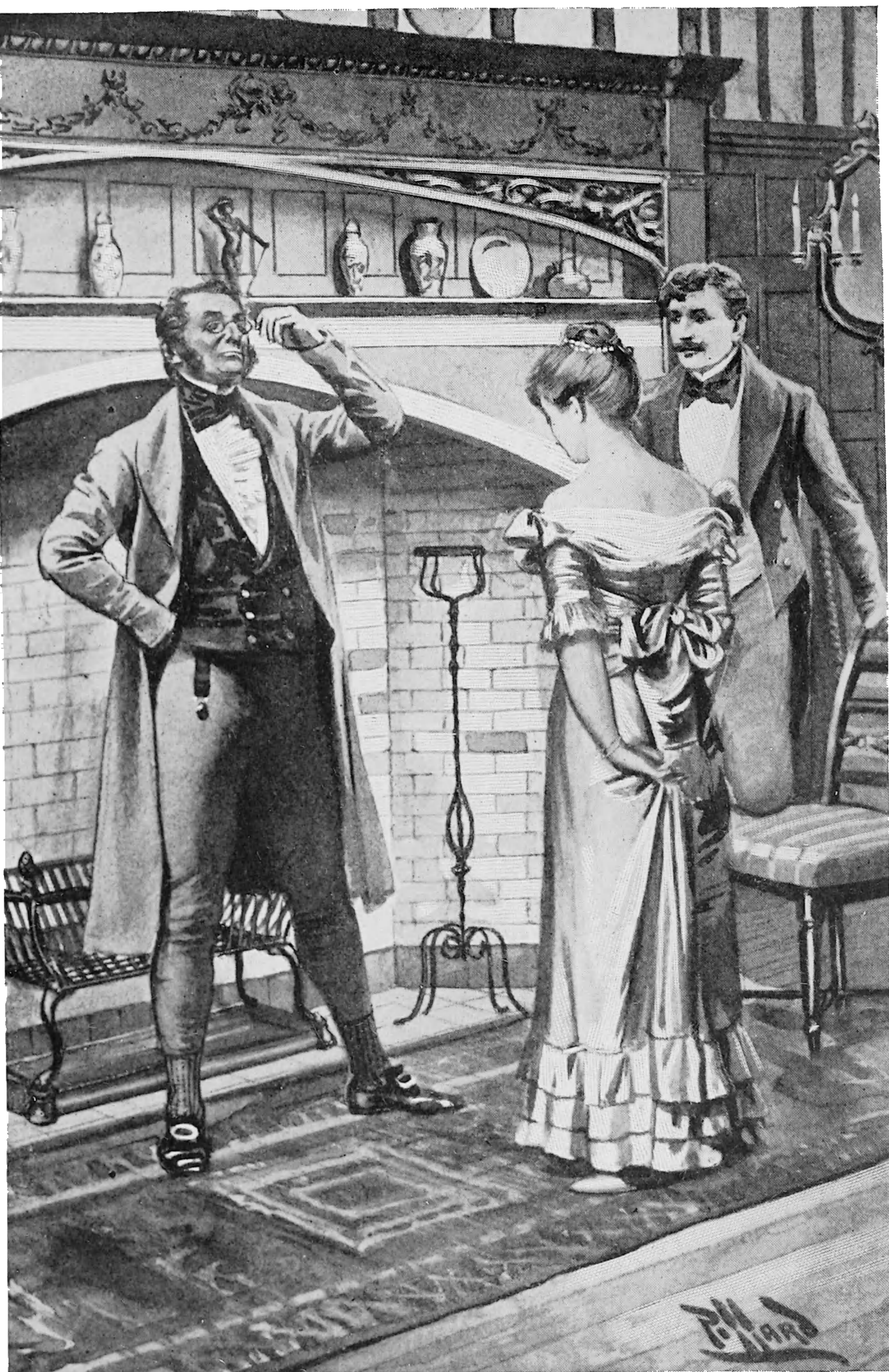
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MR. ENDICOTT PUT ON HIS GOLD-RIMMED GLASSES, AND SURVEYED HER.

See page 13.

A DAUGHTER OF THE SEA

By

Amy Le Feuvre

Author of "Heather's Mistress," "Probable
Sons," etc.



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PERRANCOVE TOWERS

“And sudden close before them showed
His towers....
Broad, massive, high, and stretching far,
And held impregnable in war.
On a projecting rock they rose,
And round three sides, the ocean flows.”
Marmion.

Kingstawton was at its very sleepest stage. It was three o'clock on a blazing August afternoon many years ago.

Heat simmered in the air amongst the green meadows. Red Devonshire kine lay under the old elms, or stood ankle-deep in the stream flowing smoothly by. The road outside the “Stag's Head” was deserted; only a sandy mongrel lay half asleep under the wooden seat of the old inn porch. He looked, with his tongue hanging out, as if he were at the last stage of exhaustion; but when the horn of the distant coach sounded, he bounded to his feet and stood in an instant erect and alert. A good shake of his wiry body, a deep bark, and life began to dawn around the “Stag's Head.” An ostler struggled into his coat, and came out, rubbing his eyes after his afternoon nap; the landlord, with an ill-concealed yawn, planted himself with

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some dignity in his porch. Two old rustics came hobbling out of the bar ; one to go on to the next village with some dairy produce for a customer, the other in hopes of earning a few pence by carrying parcels for a possible passenger. A few minutes later and the coach appeared. Only two passengers alighted, but these caused considerable commotion by the amount of baggage that belonged to them, and the landlord seemed perturbed and uneasy at the sight of them.

The travellers were both men ; one considerably older than the other, but both had that bronzed weather-beaten appearance, that carelessness in dress, that betokened foreign wanderings, and their baggage was of all shapes and sizes.

The landlord stepped up to them respectfully.

“Glad to see you back, sir. We heard you were coming, but did not think it would be to-day. No carriage is here. Will you have ordered it, sir?”

The elder of the two men, whose hair was plentifully besprinkled with grey, and whose face was a keen resolute one, with perhaps a little cynicism discernible in the thin cleanly-shaven lips, turned round carelessly.

“Good-day, Somers. Hope you and your family are well. Carriage? No, I have ordered none. I have come down sooner than I thought. We must borrow a trap from you. Do not tell me you have none in, for custom is never brisk in these parts ! And give us a good horse, for we want a rest badly, and must be home before nightfall. Do not keep us

waiting longer than you can help, there is a good fellow."

The landlord disappeared, and the old rustic hobbled after him, muttering as he did so—

"Ay, Mr. Endicott do wear well to be sure! 'Tis ten year come Monday nex' that he went off on his travel to them haythen parts, and his voice do seem as hearty as ever!"

Mr. Endicott had by this time seated himself on the shady wooden bench; his companion, a broad-shouldered, long-limbed man, with crisp brown hair, and thick moustache, was still occupied in superintending the disbursement of the luggage.

He came up in a minute, looking tired and heated. "What a sweltering little place, Endicott! No wonder these poor beggars take their time over putting out their hand to anything!"

Mr. Endicott stretched out his legs, and pulling a pipe out of his pocket commenced to fill and light it.

"This is the land of leisure," he said, looking at the impatience of his friend with an amused smile. "If we start on our way from here in an hour's time, we may think ourselves fortunate."

"It is a comfort your's is a bachelor's establishment," said Cuthbert Gregson, following Mr. Endicott's example, and smoking as vigorously as his elder was lazily.

There was silence for a minute. Mr. Endicott looked away over the sunny meadows with a dreamy absent gaze; then he said suddenly—

“Perhaps you will not find it such bachelor quarters as you imagine, Cuthbert. My sister keeps house for me.”

“You have never mentioned her.”

“No; I am not one to talk of my belongings. She is all I have left, and is a good soul. She has been taking charge of a child ward of mine; the daughter of a first cousin who used to be much to me when I was young, but she married a man I could not stand, and it was only at her dying request I promised to bring up her daughter as my own.”

“And what age is this young lady now?” asked Cuthbert, a blank look of dismay crossing his face.

“Oh! just a child; a wild little harum-scarum when I left; but I am experimenting on her. She has been left to grow as nature intends. My sister is not one to form or restrain; I have forbidden it. Do you believe in the laws of heredity?”

“I haven’t given the matter much thought. I—
rather think I do.”

“Her father,” said Mr. Endicott slowly and thoughtfully, “was a frank generous hot-tempered thorough-going scamp. Weak as to virtues, strong as to vice, and yet kind-hearted with it all. Her mother had an ice-cold, Puritan nature; no heart, and more brains than a woman ought to have. I am curious to see how the child will develop, and that is why I would not make my will last week as you urged. I doubt if she is old enough to be sufficiently formed; and my will must wait. I intend her to have my property,

if she will be capable of managing it wisely, if not I have other intentions."

"And your sister?" Cuthbert could not refrain from asking.

He had known Mr. Endicott for the last five years. They had travelled together through mountains and wilds. At the peril of his own life the elder man had rescued the younger from a cruel death at the hands of a savage hill-tribe, amongst whom he had fallen. Their friendship deepened as time went on. Both were lonely men with no home ties; both were fond of intellectual research; and were reserved and silent by nature. Through the five years of their daily intercourse, Mr. Endicott had never confided as much of his home life as he was now doing on the wooden bench outside the "Stag's Head." Cuthbert listened and wondered, and yet understood, how the old associations of the place could unlock the most silent tongue. There were other reasons too that perhaps had helped to rouse Mr. Endicott from his usual taciturnity. He had come home in ill health, and had been in the hands of a London doctor. Specialists at this time were very rare, but the doctor was a clever one, and he had to break the tidings to his patient that his case was incurable, and that in all human probability he had only a few months to live. Such tidings must at all times be a shock to the calmest and most phlegmatic temperament. Mr. Endicott received them quietly and said little, but he thought much. He was now "travelling home to die," as he

put it to his friend, and the only words that Cuthbert said to him were—

“I will stay with you as long as you want me.”

“My sister,” repeated Mr. Endicott, in reply to Cuthbert’s question. “Oh, she has money and a house of her own in the North. She would not thank me for bequeathing her Perrancove. These last ten years have been years of self-denial to her, I fear. Its wildness does not suit her gentle nature.”

Cuthbert said no more. They sat on and smoked, and at length a heavy, lumbering trap appeared, their luggage was stowed away in the back, and they set off for a good two hours’ drive.

Through shady Devonshire lanes, with high ferny banks on either side, up and down hill, across a bit of wild moorland where the salt scent of the sea for the first time met them, and then the country grew more wild and bare and less wooded.

“We are getting close to the Cornish coast,” said Mr. Endicott. “My place is more than half on Cornish soil, though we call ourselves Devon.”

After a steep ascent with the blue ocean on the right, they at length stopped before some heavy iron gates. A short avenue of rather stunted oaks led them up to an old grey stone house, a building which seemed to defy the raging elements that so often threatened to sweep it into the ocean below. On one side the rocky cliff on which it was built descended precipitously to the sea some hundreds of feet beneath, whilst an ivy-covered turret stood up stur-

dily like a weather-beaten sentinel, and seemed to shelter the rest of the house from the windy quarter. Green turf, and a few bright flower-beds before the massive front door somewhat softened the sombre ruggedness of Perrancove Towers. In the golden afternoon sunshine it looked a pleasant spot; but Cuthbert found himself wondering if its aspect would be as cheerful in the grey dark days of winter, and he shuddered at the thought.

A large rough hound sprang forward with a deep bark as the trap came to a standstill; and a very old man opening the door rather hastily, seemed quite overcome at the sight of his master.

“You didn’t expect me so soon,” said Mr. Endicott, holding out his hand kindly to his old servant. “Why, Baldwin, be a man! Do you think you see a ghost?”

“Whist, master, I do be brave glad to see ’ee back to the place agen; but I’ve had dreams three nights a-runnin’ that I shouldn’t like to utter.”

Mr. Endicott passed him by a little impatiently; and a shadow seemed to fall on his face.

“Come, Cuthbert,” he said; “I will introduce you to my sister. I know where to find her.”

He led the way through a dark square hall past a stone staircase, and pushing aside a heavy curtain at the farther end of it, opened a door, and Cuthbert found himself in a quaint oak room with stained windows. A small frail-looking little woman, with white hair, rose with tremulous dignity to receive them. She was working at a round table in a deep

window recess, and the sun streaming through a yellow pane of glass above her, illuminated her with a golden radiance.

Very quiet was the greeting between her and her brother. Nothing ever ruffled Miss Endicott's serene composure. She lived in an atmosphere of her own, and if difficulties barred her path, she quietly glided round them, leaving others to settle and solve them.

"This is a surprise, George! I did not think you would be with us till next week. How are you?"

"Rather tired with the heat of the midday journey," said Mr. Endicott. "Now, Matilda, let me introduce Mr. Gregson to you, of whom you have heard, but never seen."

"I am very pleased to make your acquaintance," Miss Endicott said, with a graceful little curtsy.

"And where is the child?" inquired Mr. Endicott, after some further conversation.

"Out of doors. She is rarely in. You will find her grown, George."

A short time afterwards, Cuthbert was taking a stroll through the grounds. A keen sea-breeze was blowing inland; he felt the salt spray on his cheeks as he walked, and the break of the waves against the rocks below almost tired him with its obtrusive roar. From the upper terrace of turf and flowers he descended some old stone steps to a sheltered kitchen garden, where, in spite of salt breezes, the vegetables and fruit seemed to thrive. An old oak door studded with iron nails, and fully two feet thick, led through

the grey stone wall surrounding it, down a winding path along the cliff, and as he sauntered leisurely down, voices from below arrested his attention.

“Peter Trevannon, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! Give the poor thing to me this minute!”

“’Twasn’t I that caught ’un, Missy; ’twas David Shelly, an’ he knows how to zet his legs a-runnin’ afore you’m in zight. Her leg be right broken, zo it be. ’Tis a puzzlement zurely what I’ll be doin’ with ’un.”

“Give her to me, and I’ll mend her leg, and see that she goes back to her nest again; and if either of you boys dare to climb up this part of the cliff again, I’ll—I’ll prosecute you!”

A minute after, and Cuthbert was face to face with a young girl, who came hastily and breathlessly up the path, carrying a struggling seagull in her arms. He knew instinctively who it was. The clear, fresh young voice, the upright carriage, and proud little poise of the head, proclaimed Una Carteret to be a thorough little gentlewoman. She was in the shabbiest attire. The stained and torn blue serge dress reaching only to her ankles, and the faded blue worsted cap on her head, and the stout nail boots on her feet, might have belonged to the roughest fisher-girl. Yet Una’s strong personality claimed attention before her clothes. Her slender little figure had a sturdiness and resolute intrepidity about it that was almost boyish. Her small oval face, with its clear rosy complexion, and soft dark-grey eyes, fringed by heavy

black lashes, was an attractive one, from the frank, guileless look of fresh innocence about it; but even in the short moment of time that Cuthbert let his eyes rest on her, he noted the strength of will and purpose that characterised her little mouth and chin. Her bright brown hair was flowing in the wind, and he noted with amusement that her first instinct on seeing him was to raise her hand to her head, and hastily try to confine it in the coils from which it had escaped. She looked up at him in pretty confusion.

“Can you be my guardian, Mr. Endicott?” she asked. “You must have come before your time.”

Cuthbert smiled and shook his head.

“He is in the house. I am his friend.”

“Oh, Mr. Gregson. I have heard about you. I can’t make my curtsey, for this poor gull is suffering so. Those wretched boys have found her nest, and stoned her out of it, and lamed her. Are you good at doctoring? Will you help me? I’m afraid her leg is broken.”

Cuthbert took the wounded bird in his hand and looked at it gravely.

“Yes, I think I can set it,” he said.

“Come this way quickly, for if Mr. Endicott is here I ought to make myself tidy for him, only I cannot leave the poor thing in its misery. I will take you to my room; you must not mind its untidiness.”

She led the way with rapid steps through the kitchen garden, and then taking a path almost over-

grown with shrubs and rank grass, came to a standstill before one of the old stone turrets of the house.

She thrust open a door, and Cuthbert, following her, found himself in a strange room for a girl of that period. There was a thick matting over the floor; at one end was a carpenter's bench with its tools. On a sheepskin beside it lay a sleek greyhound, who rose to his feet and regarded the stranger with suspicion in his soft eyes. A bookcase stood against one wall, a large cage of doves against the other. Upon a square table in the center of the room was a workbasket with needlework, a plate of fruit, and a case of trout and salmon flies. Fishing rods, a shrimping net, and a small rifle adorned one wall, and on the floor near the carpenter's bench was the framework of a small boat. With the exception of the basket of needlework, the room was hardly fitted up as a young lady's sanctum. It was long before our present-century girls had proclaimed such boyish proclivities, and Cuthbert Gregson looked and wondered.

Una was hastily opening a small cupboard, and producing rag and ointment.

"The skin is scratched and broken," she announced. "This is my surgical cupboard. I doctor all the animals here. You will want some splints. I will get them ready."

For the next ten minutes or so they were very busy with the wounded gull. When the broken leg had been successfully set, Una produced an old

wooden cage from a corner and popped the bird into it.

“The last inmate was a white owl with a broken wing,” she said. “I call this cage my hospital. Now I will give her something to eat, and then she must stay there till to-morrow.”

“You are a young lady with varied pursuits,” said Cuthbert, looking round the room.

“Yes,” she said carelessly. “I always find plenty to do.”

Then, a spark of pride kindling her eyes, she pointed to the boat.

“I have made every bit of that myself, and I mean to finish it alone. Tom Tanner helped me with one, but I’m determined to have no help with this.”

“You’re an uncommon good hand at it, I should say,” said Cuthbert, regarding her handiwork with interest.

“We must go,” she said a little imperatively. “Miss Endicott will be wanting me.”

She opened another door which led into the entrance hall, then sped away up the stone stairs, and Cuthbert did not see her till dinner time. Dinner was at six, and when Una came in shyly and quietly behind Miss Endicott, and was introduced to her guardian, Cuthbert looked at her in wonder.

She was dressed in the fashion of the day, with low neck and short sleeves. Her gown of dark blue velvet touched the ground, old point lace adorning

neck and shoulders. Her brown hair was caught up with a string of pearls, and the roughly-clad fisher-maiden was metamorphosed into a sweet and gracious little princess.

Mr. Endicott put on his gold-rimmed glasses, and surveyed her in perplexity.

“This is not Una?” he questioned.

“Yes,” Miss Endicott replied. “As you see, she is a child no longer. Her birthday was last month. She came of age then.”

“The child twenty-one!” Mr. Endicott exclaimed in a dazed fashion. “I have been dreaming indeed.”

Una looked at her guardian with a sparkle of mischief in her eye, then she dropped him a demure curtsy.

He took her by the hand and drew her gently to him. Then, with lowered eyebrows, he put one hand under her chin, and turned her face up to him.

Una met his dark frowning gaze with steady frankness.

“A child no longer,” he repeated in a murmur to himself.

“But if I may speak, sir, I do not feel at all grown up. It is only a question of clothes; and this attire always wearies me. If it is not pleasing to you I will gladly change it for short petticoats. May I do so?”

“Una, be discreet and quiet!” said Miss Endicott in warning tones. “Dinner is served. Let us come into the dining-room.”

Mr. Endicott offered his arm to his sister, Cuthbert did the same to Una, and conversation flowed on evenly at the dinner-table, personal topics not being touched upon again. Yet every now and then a low murmur would escape the lips of Una's guardian.

“A child no longer! I have been dreaming!”

CHAPTER II.

UNA CARTERET

“An open-hearted maiden, true and pure.”
The Princess.

The next morning Una was summoned to her guardian's presence in the old library.

As Mr. Endicott leant back in his black oak chair, surrounded by books, the duskiness and sombre furniture of the room seemed in fit keeping with his mood.

His face was lined and worn. Suffering and anxiety had accentuated the sternness of his rugged features, but had not dimmed the eagle glance, the keen flash in his dark eyes.

When Una tripped in, the personification of youthful freshness and beauty, the contrast seemed to strike him.

“She is on the threshold of life—just stepping over it—I am leaving it, and am stepping over another and darker threshold. Would I change places? I think, on the whole, I would not.”

Then with a cynical smile on his lips he proceeded to put his ward through rather a strange catechism.

“I know nothing about you,” he commenced abruptly. “Sit down and listen to me. I have, for

reasons of my own, allowed you to grow up absolutely unchecked and unfettered in your young life. What pursuits you have chosen you have been allowed to follow without any hindrance. We are naturally isolated here, for we have never entertained, and there is no society within reach of us. I conclude you have no friends of your own class. You have had to form your own ideas and gain your own experience. My sister has carried out my instructions, and has not interfered with you. She tells me the old vicar and she have educated you between them. That is to say, they have given you the orthodox teaching that girls are supposed to need to make them good and capable housewives. Barring this, you have been allowed to go your own way. Am I correct in these statements?"

Una sat looking at her guardian with a little wrinkle of perplexity and awe between her eyes. His concluding question was put so sharply that she started, then replied composedly—

"Yes, sir."

"Now give me your undivided attention. I wish to know a few things about you, and my sister suggests that you can tell me better than she can. What are your favorite pursuits?"

"Do you mean, what do I like doing best? I think rowing and making boats."

Mr. Endicott elevated his eyebrows, then took a note-book out of his pocket and jotted down this answer.

“Have you any other likings?”

“Oh, yes, a great many. I think,” the girl went on, looking up at her gaurdian with a winning smile, “I like everybody and everything except cruelty and lies.”

“And what do you fear? Young girls are full of fears, I believe.”

Una knitted her brows, then again raised her eyes and there was a proud light in them as she replied—

“I am afraid of no one—I fear nothing.”

Mr. Endicott gazed at her contemplatively.

“What are your ideas of life—its pleasures—its duties? Do you ever think at all?”

Una met the mocking gleam in her guardian’s eye with a twinkle in her own.

“It wants thought to answer these questions. Life to me is delightful. Summer brings pleasure, winter duty. At least, I think it seems so to me. In winter I have to be indoors sewing with Miss Endicott, reading aloud, and listening to the storms she does not like me to be out in. But summer brings me perfect liberty. I love it.”

“Life begins and ends with self,” murmured Mr. Endicott, jotting that conclusion down in his notebook.

Una caught the words, and looked a little startled.

“And your opinion of your fellow-creatures—your dependence on them, or independence of them?”

“I think,” said Una slowly and thoughtfully; “that I like men better than women; they do things straight

away with no fears, and they like the things I do, and women don't. Most of my best friends are men."

This calm statement startled Mr. Endicott in his turn.

"What kind of men?"

"Oh, the fishermen. There are no others in the village. I like some of the women, but there is only one girl that is any good. Kathie Petherick and I brought in one of the smacks that got adrift in the teeth of a gale. She and I had a rowing race one day. I beat her. She has splendid muscle, but nothing to mine. Kathie lives with her grandmother, and has a boat of her own. I like old Mrs. Petherick. Next to men I like old women, and then children. The old people aren't treated very well in our village. When they get past work they are looked upon as burdens even by their children."

"You believe in honoring one's parents?"

"Yes: for even if they drink themselves to death it's the duty of their children to look after them. I told Tom Wace that only yesterday. If I had a father who was like old Samuel Wace, I would feel nothing could make me leave him or refuse him what he wanted. Samuel worked for Tom when he was an idle boy at school, so Tom ought to work for Samuel now he is drinking himself to death."

Mr. Endicott shot a keen glance at the girl before him. Then a heavy frown preceded the next question.

"And what is your religion? In what do you be-

lieve? I don't mean your profession of religion. That, I suppose, is the same as my sister's. But what is your personal experience of religion?"

There was silence. Una looked at her guardian rather vaguely. At last she said—

"I go to church and read a chapter of the Bible every Sunday night before I go to bed. I say a short prayer, morning and evening."

"In what do you believe. I ask you?" Mr. Enfield's tone was fierce. "What does your religion do for your life, your heart, your soul? What would it do for you on death's borderland?"

The answer was long in coming.

"Nothing."

The frown relaxed: and the next question was mildly put.

"Your chief faults?"

Una had been looking puzzled and anxious, but now a smile shone out.

"I don't think I know what they are. I am not patient. I like my own way, and if I can't get it I am furious: but then my way always seems right to me. If it isn't, I don't think I often want it. That is, if I see quite clearly that it would do harm to others if I persisted in it. What I dislike is to have to give way when I know I am right and others are wrong."

There was another silence. Then—

"Your ideas of money and property?"

"I should like as much money as I wanted."

"How would you spend it?"

Una smiled, then nodded her little head mysteriously.

“I have plans for it all. I have to begin so many things and leave them unfinished for want of money. I should like to be able to give wherever I saw it was really needed, but I would never give it unless it was. A man, an artist, came here last summer and stayed at Cliff Farm; he used to throw pennies to the boys for want of something better to do, and he was always giving money to the men. The idle worthless ones got most, and there was more drunkenness while he was here than we have ever had before. I spoke to him about it, but he only laughed, and said he believed in equal rights, and was trying to get rid of his surplus.”

“Do you believe in equal rights?”

“No; I believe I could spend money on people better than they could spend it themselves.”

“But do they think so?”

Una laughed a little.

“I should think not. George Treggann did three days' work for me and I bought him a new pair of boots instead of giving him the money. He was quite put out—said he had promised three other boys some pipes and tobacco and a meal of sausages and potatoes with beer at the ‘Blue Lobster.’ I told him I wasn't going to pay his three friends for what he had done, but he did not seem to see it.”

Mr. Endicott shut up his note-book.

“You are happy here, child? Can you be content

to live and die here? Have you any thoughts about your future?"

"Only thoughts of what I would do here if I could," responded the girl.

"I should like to hear those thoughts."

But Una shook her head.

"You would laugh at them. You would not understand. I am quite content to live and die here. I don't think I could live anywhere else."

"You can leave me," her guardian said, with a shade of sadness in his tone; and Una disappeared at once.

She went straight to her sanctum, pushed aside a concealed door behind a curtain, which door she had not shown Cuthbert, and sped down some steep rough steps which wound down and down to the very bottom of the cliff on which Perrancove Towers was built. She was breathless when she at last found herself on the beach in a sandy cove which contained two small boats. In a very few minutes she had, with the strength of a fisher-lad, run the smallest of these boats down the shelving bank into the sea. Then jumping lightly in, she took her oars and was soon shooting out upon the blue ocean, rowing with long even strokes, and raising her fair flushed young face to the open sky with a little happy sigh of delight. White gulls flew round her and skimmed the waters with careless freedom. As she looked up at the grey old building on the top of the cliff, her thoughts shaped themselves into words. In common with many lonely people, Una had acquired the bad habit of uttering her

thoughts aloud. "He is as grey and dark as his home. But I like him! He seemed to think my opinions might be heard, and he listened as if he were taking note of them. Now, Miss Endicott listens, but shakes her head, or sighs, or what is worse still, smiles at me! What curious questions he did ask me! And how fierce he was about religion. I wonder what I do believe in. Why ought religion to be part of one's life?"

She pulled in her oars and let herself drift. The sea was unusually calm that morning; the sky cloudless. Una generally did a lot of thinking when out alone; but her thoughts were taking a fresh direction now.

"Well," she continued, after some moments' hard thinking; "the Creed will, after all, answer that question best. 'I believe in God the Father'—of course I do—and I believe He is good, for isn't the world lovely? And I believe in His Son, and in His death and resurrection, and ascension. I should never think of questioning the truth of it; but it has nothing to do with my life. Religion does nothing for me at all. It makes me a little uncomfortable to have to sit up on Sundays when the weather is hot, in my best clothes, and listen to Mr. Preston for more than an hour. He never tells us religion ought to be a personal experience. He argued, I remember, last Sunday that the Bible was true, but I never thought it wasn't. I think, as far as I am concerned, I should live just as happily if there were no religion of any sort in the world."

“Marnin’, Missy!”

Una started, and slipped her oars into the water again. Another boat was passing her. In it was a grey-bearded fisher, and Cuthbert.

“Where are you going?” she demanded, bending to her oars with such a will that the other boat, though abreast with her, could not pass her.

“Anywhere,” said Cuthbert lazily; “I want to see the coast a little.”

“Take him to Eagle’s Head, Martin.”

“Nay, Missy, the tide be turned, and the current too strong.”

Una laughed a little mockingly.

“You are too lazy, Martin. I am going there. It only wants an extra oar.”

“Will you take me with you?” asked Cuthbert, thinking that the girl’s bright animated face would be a pleasant exchange to the rather surly demeanor of his boatman.

“Yes, if you will take an oar. I was going to call for Jim Tanner.”

“Jim be out in his smack,” said Martin, looking rather relieved than otherwise when Cuthbert slipped a silver coin in his hand and prepared to leave him.

The boats were brought together, and in a few minutes Cuthbert and Una, bending to their oars, were making the small boat shoot along through the blue water at a speed which astonished old Martin. He looked after them with a shake of his head.

“All to no purpose! Waste o’ wind! And no profit in ’un!”

They passed the fishing village with the little white houses up the edge of the cliff, and the small bay that was now bereft of its red-brown sailing smacks; for the fishermen were not yet back from their nightly toil; and then rounding a high jutting crag, they came in sight of some rocky coves, and pulling ceased to be an easy matter.

“The current is a little strong here,” said Una; “but when we get round that jagged bit of the cliff, we are all right. That is the Eagle’s Head, and beyond are Condry’s Cave and the Witches’ Hole. None of the fishers liking passing them, for they’re supposed to be haunted. Martin wouldn’t row by the Witches’ Hole if you gave him ten pounds! The Tanners are the only people that have no fear of it. They live right above. Do you see that little house on the top of Eagle’s Head?”

“Rather far from the beach, is it not, if they get their living by fishing?”

“They have a little boat-house at the bottom of the cliff, and get down to it by steps. They’re different to the rest. To begin with, they are not natives of the place, and I don’t think they are very popular. They have been here about twenty years. Old Eli Tanner married Susan Crane, the daughter of the richest farmer in our neighborhood. She met him at Plymouth when she was staying with an aunt; and persuaded him to come and live at Perrancove. He was

a boat-builder by trade. Her father was very angry, for the Cranes had never married out of the neighborhood, and he wished her to marry a farmer, not a fisherman. They built themselves that little house, but she died when Tom was born. Eli brought Tom up without a woman near the place. When Tom grew up he married a girl in service. She was kitchenmaid to Mr. Endicott's mother. She only lived a year after Jim was born, and now the three men live together, and do for themselves entirely. People say there's a curse on those marrying out of Perrancove. You see Tom's wife didn't belong to these parts. I tell Jim he musn't marry at all. I don't see why he should. They are all very comfortable, and the grandfather is a hale and hearty old man. Marriage is rather foolish, don't you think so?"

Cuthbert had not been following this family history with much interest. He now started at Una's concluding words. "Yes, of course," he said a little absently; "marriage is very foolish. Ah, this is grand! Is this Condry's Cave? Can we venture nearer?"

Great columns of granite rock formed an entrance to a gigantic cavern, the sides and roof of which were of the richest colouring, from sapphire blue and amber green to deep blood red; and the waves dashed up the dark narrow inlet, with a dull roar of defiance.

"No, we cannot land here, we should be dashed against the rocks. The Witches' Hole is the safe

landing place; but I—I don't think we will land there to-day."

"Why not? You are not afraid?"

The bright, indignant glance that was flashed up at him made Cuthbert smile.

They had passed Condyl's Cave now; and after a little more rowing past some very wild bits of cliff, they again came in sight of a small cove. It looked gloomy and dark enough for its name. The sun was entirely hidden behind the masses of rock which surrounded it, and the very air as they passed, seemed to be damp and mouldy.

Cuthbert drew in his oar and gazed contemplatively into the dark recess under the cliff.

"I should like to land for a few minutes," he said; "it looks interesting."

"We can't land this morning," said Una, a little curtly.

"Why not?" persisted Cuthbert.

Then with a swift-rising blush, Una turned upon him angrily—

"Because I don't choose to!"

Cuthbert raised his eyebrows in amused astonishment at this outburst.

"Then perhaps we had better turn back," he suggested very quietly, after a few minutes' silence.

Una turned the boat, without a word. Presently she looked up and laughed.

"I am sorry I was cross," she said. "Do you always like your own way?"

“I am not sure that I have one,” was the slow reply.

“I have, and I like to get it. I think—I nearly always do.”

“It is very bad for you.”

“So Miss Endicott always says. I don’t see why, unless it does harm to any one else.”

“But it often does. It tries their tempers, if they want another way.”

Una looked up into his face meditatively.

“So it does mine.”

Cuthbert smiled.

“It is too warm to argue,” he said lazily.

When they reached the little fishing bay again, Una said—

“I am going to take the boat in here; and if you like to walk up the village with me, I will point you out any places or people of interest.”

“Thank you,” said Cuthbert meekly. “May I ask if all the coast is as grand round here as the bit we have been along to-day?”

“Yes, quite as grand, and it is all very dangerous, unless you know the currents and rocks. In stormy weather, ships sometimes get driven towards us, and if they do, they are wrecked at once!”

“Is there no lighthouse?”

Una caught her breath.

“Oh, if there were!” Then she added quietly, “I don’t know how one could be built. And we are very conservative at Perrancove. We don’t like innova-

tions. We are wonderfully quiet and unmolested. I think the coastguardsmen consider us lambs of innocence and purity, for they hardly ever show themselves in these parts. Smuggling has never thriven here, for the coast is too dangerous. And as we don't smuggle, we are left alone."

Cuthbert looked at her. There was hidden meaning under her words, which he failed to catch. She seemed sometimes to be older than her looks. A couple of men ran down to the beach directly they saw her boat. Evidently she was well known and liked by every fisher in the village. As they made their way up the steep cobbled lane, she narrated in easy assured tones the history of each family and individual who inhabited the different houses. She left Cuthbert when they reached the top of the cliff; and he, turning to a little knot of men lounging round a telescope which was mounted on an old gun, was soon engaged in conversation with them.

"Come to stay at the Towers?" asked a stalwart, weather-beaten old man. "'Tisn't often us have visitors here. That's a fine lass, eh?"

"Do you mean Miss Carteret?"

"Ay—Missy us calls 'un. She be a brave one for boatin' an' sich like."

"There be two on 'em comin' in," said an old man, peering through the telescope. "'Tis Tom Tanner first this time."

"Ugh!" grunted a man standing close to Cuthbert, "Tanners be foremost anywhere—worse luck to 'un!"

“Why?” asked Cuthbert curiously, remembering the name. “Aren’t those the three men who live out at Eagle’s Head?”

“Iss. Missy will have let on about ’em. Jim Tanner, for all his dumb doggedness, finds his tongue to she!”

“Ay, but he have a call to be civil like sin’ Friday week?”

“What happened then?” asked Cuthbert again.

“ ’Twas like this,” said one eagerly. “Jim be a brave ’un to swim, an’ he were takin’ a header from his boat out near Cond’y’s Cave. Missy, her an’ Martin were in her bit o’ sailin’ boat; and sudden like Jim gives a call. Just one call for help, it were, an’ Martin he laughed. ‘ ’Tis to ’track our notice, Missy,’ says he. ‘Jim wouldn’t call for nothin’,’ says she; ‘us must go to him.’ ‘Wind and waves is contrary,’ says Martin. ‘This ’ere cockle-shell dursn’t go nigh Cond’y’s Cave.’ Jim’s head had disappeared. Missy says no more; her kicks off hern boots, and into the water her splashes. ’Twas a brave struggle; an’ Martin said his prayers four times backerds an’ forrards, for he never thought her would weather through it. Her brought Jim to the boat. Jim had the cramp, an’ were nigh gone when her clutched hold on ’un. He were onsensible when her got ’un in, and didn’t come to till the doctor worked ’un like a windmill; an’ when he opened his eyes he hadn’t a chance to thank Missy, for her were gone like a flash o’ lightenin’. Jim have no words for any folks; us never ha’ heard ’un speak his thanks,

but 'tis a rayther ongreeable event to be beholden to a maid in sich a manner!"

"Ess fay! The Tanners be sure to meet they fate. Them that trifle wi' bewitched corners, an' marry outlandish maids, must surely suffer. Jim be only saved fur worse to foller!"

"But why?" asked Cuthbert persistently.

An old man grasped him by the cuff of his sleeve.

"Do 'ee see th' Eagle's Head over yonner?"

"Yes, I have just rowed past it."

"Was 'ee nigh the Witches' Hole?"

"Yes, a gruesome-looking spot."

There was an assenting groan through the little group.

"Las' summer," said the old man impressively, gazing up into Cuthbert's face with blinking awe-struck eyes. "Las' summer a boat o' careless mockin' lads rowed in. Us warned 'em, us told 'em to bid they sweethearts goodbye afore they were destructed!"

"And what happened?"

"Th' old boat were washed in, wi' a black mark o' five fingers on the gunwale!"

The old man lowered his voice to a whisper.

"Were they all drowned? What is the story of the Witches' Hole?"

No one answered.

Cuthbert's tone was too flippant for such a solemn subject; and finding his question would remain unanswered, he sauntered back to the Towers.

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE PROPOSITION

“Since this fortune falls to you,
Be content and seek no new,
If you be well pleased with this,
And hold your fortune for your bliss,
Turn you where your lady is,
And claim her with a loving kiss.”

Merchant of Venice.

It was a wet day. Mr. Endicott sat in his library at his writing-table, surrounded by books and papers. Cuthbert, with his pipe in his mouth, was lounging upon the window seat, gazing into the sodden wind-swept garden, and listening abstractedly to the sea-gulls' screams, and the dull roar of the waves below.

Presently a knock at the door was heard, and Una, bearing a message from Miss Endicott, appeared. She was still in her short shabby serge gown, but a voluminous white apron with big pockets, and a bunch of keys dangling at her side, proclaimed the fact that she was in the midst of housewifely duties.

Her fresh young face and voice seemed like a ray of sunshine to the two men. Mr. Endicott raised his tired eyes, and a gleam of amusement shot into them.

Laying down a book, over which he had been poring, he said very drily—

“Una, my dear, you seem, for a woman, to have strong opinions of your own. Have you any on matrimony?”

“May I sit down and think before I speak?” the girl asked, a mischievous smile coming to her rosy lips.

Then after a pause she added—

“I think Miss Endicott would say such a question ought never to be discussed by me.”

“Miss Endicott is not here. You may give me your views on the subject.”

“I really do not know much about it,” responded the girl, meeting her guardian’s keen gaze with calm unruffled eyes. “I suppose it is most women’s lot. If I ever marry, I hope that my husband will be too busy to be much with me; and then I can go my own way; and I am sure we should get on very comfortably together. I think, on the whole, I should prefer to be without him—but if I wanted a home, and some one to talk to occasionally, I should not mind having him.”

“You require very little,” observed Cuthbert, gazing at the pretty little figure with some interest.

“I would never *require* a husband at all,” retorted Una, with a slight toss of her head.

“But you could tolerate one?” said Mr. Endicott with a smile. “There, run along, and do not trouble your little head with such questions yet!”

She left the room, and there was silence again between the two men.

Presently Mr. Endicott spoke.

“Cuthbert, do you ever intend to settle down and have a home of your own?”

“I have dreams of it sometimes,” replied the younger man, looking across at his friend with a faint surprise in his glance.”

Mr. Endicott got up from his chair, and began to pace the room restlessly.

“It is hard lines,” he said with knitted brows, “that after all these years of labour and research, when at last I was congratulating myself upon having material and information that will make no small stir in the literary world, to be baulked by ill-health, and——”

He faltered. Cuthbert spoke hastily.

“You will live to write your book. There is no reason why you should not.”

“Twelve months will scarcely be long enough to do it thoroughly, and my time is limited to three.”

“Oh, Endicott, you don’t mean it?”

Awe and pity were in the young man’s tones. His friend smiled sadly.

“I am going up to town again very shortly. I must be within reach of medical aid, and I shrink from this country practitioner. Still, the best of them can only relieve, not cure. My sister wishes to come with me. I have broken it to her.”

There was silence. Then Cuthbert said slowly, “Life is an enigma. We are but puppets, utterly unable to resist an unseen foe.”

“Religion—our creed—would give us better comfort than that. And much as I love my books around me, the one that will be my chief guide now will be an older one than any of them. But do not let us touch on serious topics. I want to ask a favour of you. Will you undertake the writing of my book for me? We have travelled together. I have your papers, which are valuable in themselves. Will you, if I bequeath to you the results of my ten years’ wanderings, put them together and bring out something for the good of mankind? It will need persevering toil, but you are the only man who can do it?”

Cuthbert was much moved. After a little hesitation he acceded to this request, and for some time they were busily engaged in discussing the material for publication.

But Mr. Endicott had still something weighing on his mind.

“I asked you if you were likely to settle down just now,” he said. “I know you are not a marrying man, and yet I wonder if it is circumstances or inclination that has made you such a wanderer as myself?”

“Inclination, I think,” said Cuthbert, with a slow smile. “I am not very young now. I did have a vision once, but it was dispelled. My ideal was shattered, and I sickened of civilization. Now my views are broader, mellowed, and on a lower level. I have learnt to expect less, and be satisfied with less, and if I ever come across one whom I feel would be suitable and—comfortable, I may change my state.”

Mr. Endicott stopped pacing the room, and fixed his gaze earnestly on his friend.

“You have seen my ward, Una. What do you think of her?” he said abruptly.

“A nice little girl,” Cuthbert responded, looking at Mr. Endicott with some perplexity.

“I want,” said the latter, as he turned and paced the room, “I want to find a husband for her before I die. I have reasons—strong reasons—for doing so. I have been wondering if you could solve my difficulties, and take her off my hands. Now, don’t speak—listen. I think she has the makings of a good wife if managed wisely. She is a revelation to me. I have only seen her for a short time, but I have had one satisfactory interview with her, in which I fancy I have gauged her character pretty accurately. Let me give you the substance of my notes on that occasion.”

Cuthbert rose from his seat; he watched his friend produce a note-book from his pocket, and, squaring his shoulders against the wall, took a long whiff at his pipe, and listened in imperturbable silence.

Mr. Endicott glanced at him nervously, then began reading—

“UNA’S CHARACTERISTICS.

“Boyish proclivities.

“Childish affection, and liking for most of her fellow-creatures.

“Dislike of mean vices.

“Absolute fearlessness.

“Strong filial feelings.

“Religion a mere form.

“Her life begins and ends with self.

“Impatient, wilful, passionate, but open to reason.

“Self-confident, generous, but also cautious.”

He paused, and Cuthbert gave a short laugh.

“A man does not generally choose a wife like a servant. Her character may be all that can be desired, but——”

“Stay! Hear me to the end. My property here is a large one. I am leaving it all to her. I have always intended to do so. But she is an inexperienced thoughtless girl. My sister is no adviser for her. And the real difficulty is that, though she is in perfect ignorance of it, her father is still alive, and is as great a scoundrel as ever!”

Cuthbert gave a low whistle. Mr. Endicott continued—

“I am morally certain that in the event of my death, and of her becoming my heiress, her father will turn up, obtain complete influence over her, and spend my money and waste my estate, she being utterly powerless to prevent him. I want to marry her to a man who will protect her and my property; one whom I can trust to help her to carry out my wishes. And Cuthbert, if I knew that you would be that man I think I could die happy.”

“And is your ward to have no voice in the matter? We are not in France, Endicott. English girls are accustomed to look upon marriage in a different light

to that *de convenance*. Is the young lady to be married whether she wills or not?"

"You heard her views on matrimony this morning. She is a happy, careless child, and would be content with any one whom she trusted."

"It is because she is such a child, and has seen so little of the world, that it would be unfair in the extreme to tie her for life to one whom she might grow to dislike."

Mr. Endicott moved his head impatiently.

"If I have been happy in your friendship for these years, I think Una might and would be."

"You have not exactly the same tastes," said Cuthbert, with a grave smile.

"Now look here," Mr. Endicott said irritably. "I have shown you the wish of my heart. I have explained the reason for it. Of course you and she are perfectly free in the matter. If you can win her affection and make her your wife, you will have my blessing. If you don't care to try, no harm is done. Let us change the subject."

Cuthbert gave an involuntary sigh of relief; and the bell ringing for the midday meal had a welcome sound in his ears. Such a novel and unexpected proposal from his old friend perplexed and staggered him.

Yet during the next few days he found himself watching Una furtively. There was something very winsome in her bright eager young voice and manner. She seemed always interested; always occupied; and to the tired and jaded traveller her very presence was

invigorating and refreshing. She treated him very much as she did her guardian; talking perfectly freely and naturally of all her home interests, and Cuthbert soon discovered that though Miss Endicott had been nominally the mistress in her brother's absence, it was Una who in reality ruled and managed the household.

One morning as he was taking an early ramble along the beach, Una pulled in from the open sea in her boat.

"Where have you been so early?" he asked.

"Setting my lobster-pots. One has to watch the tide for them."

"You ought to have been a fisherman's daughter," said Cuthbert, as throwing off his coat, he helped her to land her boat.

"I live by the sea. I should hate not knowing how to live by it and on it," she responded quickly. "Don't you think one is supposed to study one's surroundings? If I lived in Scilly Isles I should make flowers the business of my life. Here it is not earth, but water, that interests every one."

"Then you are entirely dependent on your surroundings for interest? I think I am perfectly independent of them. I should not alter my life for climate or atmosphere. A blaze of flowers, an ocean's roar, a city's bustle, are all the same to me."

"Yes, you and Mr. Endicott are quite engrossed and happy in a library amongst piles of books. I am not a great reader."

Her voice had a shade of wistfulness in it.

“What books do you like?” asked Cuthbert with interest.

“Oh, books of travel and biography. But they always make me so sad, for they’re generally written about people who are dead. I always seem to know them so well before I finish the book, that it is just like losing a dear friend. I shut it up, and say, ‘That’s one more person I have known.’ And I wonder sometimes what it would be to see them alive and well before me. We see so few people here, that most of the men and women I have ever known are in books.”

“Do you like seeing people?”

“Yes, I like seeing you and Mr. Endicott here. I haven’t seen any men before except the fishermen to talk to. I like watching you two together; and I wonder sometimes what you are going to say next. Your conversation is so different to what I am accustomed. Things that seem so important to me are nothing to you. Things that interest you are utterly meaningless to me.”

“We are travellers,” said Cuthbert, with a smile; “that ought to interest you.”

“But you hardly ever talk about your travels. I wish you would. I should like to hear about them.”

“Take me out for a row this afternoon, and I will talk travel as much as you like.”

Una promised this with much delight, and both she and Cuthbert spent a very enjoyable time on the water in consequence.

He was a good talker, and she was a good listener. As they came home together she said naively—

“I don’t know how it is, but I enjoy talking to you much better than to Miss Endicott; I often wonder if she thinks of things at all! But I suppose she does not consider her thoughts fit for me to hear.”

“Have I told you my thoughts?” asked Cuthbert.

“I can imagine what some of them are from what you say.”

“You cannot imagine my thoughts now. Guess!”

“You are wanting some food.”

“Nothing so commonplace.”

“If they are very nice thoughts you might tell them to me.”

“They are about you.”

Una’s wondering gaze checked Cuthbert’s levity at once.”

“Have I said or done anything wrong?” she asked rather anxiously.

He shook his head.

“I was only mistaken about you.”

“How?”

“I could not tell you.”

Una said no more. Silence lasted till they entered the house. Then Cuthbert muttered under his breath as he went upstairs to his room—

“Whatever she is, she is not a fool. I wish there was no money in the question. I would like her better without it!”

CHAPTER IV.

BETROTHED

“I wonder did you ever count
The value of one human fate;
Or sum the infinite amount
Of Life's one venture....
And if you ever paused to think
That all this in your hands I laid
Without a fear:—did you not shrink
From such a burthen? half afraid,
Half wishing that you could divide
The risk, or cast it all aside.”

Adelaide Procter.

Within a month from the travellers' first arrival, Cuthbert told his friend that he was willing to carry out his wish, on condition that Una was equally willing. Miss Endicott spoke to her in fear and trembling, and when the girl had a little recovered from her astonishment her guardian called her into the library and added his word to his sister's.

“I do not wish to force you to accept him as your husband; but I hope you will feel as I do what a good husband he will make you. You will never get a better one. I am morally certain of that. I have known Cuthbert Gregson pretty intimately; he could not do a mean or unkind action; he is truth and honour personified. You have seen enough of him to like him, I am sure.”

“I don’t dislike him,” stammered Una. “But I don’t think I want to be married yet.”

Then very quickly Mr. Endicott broke to her his failing health, and the reason for him going to London and his sister accompanying him.

“But I can manage here alone quite well,” urged Una. “I like living alone. I would be most careful to keep everything as you would like; and then when you come back——”

“I shall never come back,” said her guardian gravely.

Una could not take it in.

“You told me a short while ago,” said Mr. Endicott, “that you would not at all mind a husband, provided he did not interfere too much with your plans and purposes.”

“Does Mr. Gregson really want me to marry him?” Una asked with knitted brows, after a short silence.

“He says he does.”

“He has never told me so.”

Mr. Endicott stepped to the door quickly and called the old butler.

“Tell Mr. Gregson I should like to see him at once.”

Cuthbert appeared before Una had time to offer any objection to this mode of proceeding.

“Now, Cuthbert, speak to this young lady. I shall leave you, for you will understand each other better alone.”

Una sat in an old oak chair by the window. Her

hands were lightly clasped in her lap; her little feet planted firmly together. She appeared in deep thought, but raised a frank and fearless face towards Cuthbert. Not a shadow of a blush was on her cheeks; no hesitation or discomposure in her manner.

And for a moment Cuthbert felt tongue-tied. He realized that a good deal hung upon the next few minutes between them. He wondered if he were doing both himself and her a wrong by complying with Mr. Endicott's wish. And then he took courage, and spoke; but his voice was a little husky.

"I think you have been prepared for what I want to say to you, Miss Carteret?"

"Mr. Endicott says you want to marry me."

"Yes. What will your answer be?"

"I suppose if Miss Endicott, and Mr. Endicott, and you all wish it, I must not say no," said Una very gravely.

"I hope," said Cuthbert, feeling this was a very strange wooing, "that you do not dislike the idea?"

"I don't know that I like it."

His face fell.

"I would try and make you happy," he said earnestly. "You don't dislike me, do you?"

"No, I—I like you; but to tell the truth, I don't want to be married at all. I am afraid I should not be so free."

"You shall be as free as air! I do not think of taking you away from here, and from all that you love. Your life would be just the same."

There was a little silence; then Una asked steadily, regarding him with a very earnest gaze, "Why do you wish to marry me?"

The simple question disconcerted him. Why did he? Could he say he loved her? His heart seemed cold and dead to all such feeling. He vaguely felt she might amuse and interest him in his dull moments; might manage the household, and do all that a woman should to make her husband comfortable. The utter selfishness of such views struck him for the first time. What was he going to give her in exchange for this? The very house and property was hers, and by the marriage laws then in vogue would become his after marriage. It was true he had a good private income of his own. He could be her protector against her spendthrift father; he could be her guide and adviser, a support in time of stress or difficulty. But would she consider this sufficient to make her willing to link her life to his? As he thought of these things he felt ashamed to meet her gaze. His sense of honour prevented him at this crisis of his life from prevaricating or misrepresenting the truth.

"Una," he said gently, using her Christian name for the first time, "there is not much in my favour, I own. I am older than you, and not much more than a stranger to you still. But I do know and like your guardian, and he is very anxious for our—our union. For the last eight years I have had little to do with women. I am not apt at pretty speeches; but I honestly think you and I would be happy together. The

only question I would ask you is—Have you seen any one whom you feel you would like better than me? I would not stand in your way for worlds.”

“I have seen no one,” the girl replied simply. “I have been too interested in everything here to think of marriage at all. It is not a subject that Miss Endicott has ever discussed with me. I did once say to her, when she told me I must learn certain things in order to manage a house of my own, that perhaps I should never have one. She said girls were best with husbands to look after them; and she herself was an exception to the rule. I suppose if Mr. Endicott wishes this very much, and you wish it too, I must say ‘yes.’ But I do hope it won’t make any changes in my life. I am so very happy as I am.”

There was some wistfulness in her eyes as she gazed up at him, which made Cuthbert wince a little. He resolved then and there that he would be good to her, and with an old-fashioned courtesy he raised her little hand to his lips.

“We will hope to be very happy here—both of us,” he said.

A few minutes afterwards Mr. Endicott was told that his wish had been fulfilled, and, calling his sister into the library, he gravely pledged the young couple in a glass of old port.

Una was very quiet. She slipped away as soon as she could, for the suddenness and strangeness of it all had been a shock to her. She had been brought up so very differently to most girls that her ideas were

vague and crude concerning marriage. As she said, her life had been too full of other things to give it a thought. She had had no friends in her own station of life with whom to talk about such a matter. She had seen young couples wedded amongst the fishers; but the love they talked about was a thing she supposed only confined to their class. And having heard of marriages being arranged amongst distant relations of Miss Endicott, she concluded that she was now only following the general example. Still, as she walked down to the shore and pushed out her beloved boat for a row, she had an uneasy feeling that change was coming into her life; and she wondered if it would bring her more happiness or less.

Presently, as she rounded a point, she saw a small fishing-boat coming in from the open. She hailed it with delight.

“Kathie, is that you?”

A bright-faced, handsome girl stood with one hand on the tiller the other ready to pull in her sail. Her dark hair escaped in long tresses from under her blue woollen cap; her face, with its healthy sunburn and rosy cheeks, was honest and open; and when she smiled, two white rows of even teeth dazzled you with their fairness.

“Just come in from a haul of mackerel, Missy!”

“Bring up your boat to me; I want to speak to you.”

It was the work of a few moments to do this; and Una, having secured her own boat with a rope to the

fishing-smack, now leapt into it, and, pushing aside the shining fish, sat down with a little sigh.

“I was just wishing to talk to some one, Kathie; and I always think you are a sensible girl, and know how to hold your tongue, so I’ll tell you something.”

Kathie looked interested at once.

Una held her head up with great dignity as she announced—

“I am thinking of being married.”

“Law, Missy! I never should ’a’ thought it.”

“Yes, it has astonished me very much. I thought you would be surprised. It was only the other day I was remarking what a foolish thing marriage was; and now I come to think of it, I said it to *him*, and he quite agreed with me! That is very funny!”

Una paused and seemed lost in thought for a moment; then she went on hurriedly—

“It is to Mr. Gregson, Kathie—the gentleman who is staying with us now. It seems as if it is to be, and I haven’t anything to say against him. I don’t think it will alter my life much. I hope not. We shall live on here, Mr. Endicott says. I think that it will give me a little more power with the lads here, you know. It is a good thing to have a man at your back. I shall hold him up to them as a kind of ogre. ‘If my husband hears of it, he will be very angry!’ ‘If I am not obeyed at once, I shall bring my husband to you.’ It sounds severe, doesn’t it?”

Kathie stared at Una as she ran on in this fashion. She was very humble when in “Missy’s” presence.

Able to stand alone and earn her daily bread as regularly and successfully as any man, she was yet a strange compound of childishness and shrewdness. The ways and manners of the "quality" were incomprehensible to her. She adored Una, and looked up to her with the greatest veneration; but this talk from her divinity perplexed and astonished her. Was marriage such child's play as this? Kathie had a big heart of her own, and very earnest and passionate ideas of what a true betrothal ought to be. Una spoke as if it were a kind of game! She said at last, very slowly, as she gazed with big eyes out at sea—

"If I were going to marry, Missy, it would be a very big thing to me—a *very* big thing."

Her eyes flashed with a strange light as she added—

"And him that comes for me must love me with his heart and soul; ay, and think nothin' of dyin' for me if needs be, for I'd do that and more for him!"

Una laughed.

"That's how you always talk, Kathie! But people can be married very happily without that kind of thing. I am going to be. I certainly don't expect Mr. Gregson to die for me, and I'm quite positive that I shouldn't die for him."

Kathie was silent. The breeze warned her to pull in some of her sail, and presently she lowered it all and took out her oars.

Una insisted upon taking one too, and the girls rowed on for a short time without speaking.

At last Una broke the silence.

“It makes one think—this kind of thing. And since Mr. Endicott came back he has rather upset me. He asked me such strange questions when we had our first talk together. Have you a personal experience in religion, Kathie? That was one of his questions. I don’t understand him. But I can’t get it out of my head. What do I believe in, I wonder?”

“Granny would have a brave notion of it,” responded Kathie. “Come and talk it over with her.”

“Or with old Eli Tanner. He always talks as if God lives with him all day. And he talks to Him just as if—as if He were a real Person.”

“I reckon He be,” said Kathie, her eyes on the blue ocean in front of her.

“Yes, but you know what I mean. As if He were quite, quite near. To me God is millions of miles away. I feel, if I think about it at all, as if He were a kind of Judge, weighing my actions and words every day. I would rather not think about Him.”

“And when be you goin’ to be married?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Nothing is settled yet. When are *you* going to get married, Kathie? You are older than I. I know who your husband will be, only he is a long time coming to the point.”

Kathie’s cheeks and ears got a burning red at once.

“Hist, Missy! I’ll tell you when there be anything to tell.”

“I wish Mr. Gregson was as good at boat-building as Jim Tanner is!” sighed Una.

Kathie smiled. It was no secret in Perrancove that Jim Tanner worshipped the ground on which she trod. Yet his imperturable silence and reserve baffled even those who knew him best. If Kathie's nets or lines wanted mending, she would wake up one morning and find them done by some invisible hand; if in the dusky light at night she was hauling up her boat, and found the task heavy for her weary hands, the rope would be taken from behind and the strong pull given, with only just a quiet nod and smile, as the young fisherman passed by. Kathie's eyes would brighten and her heart throb when he did by chance speak to her. There were plenty of other young men who were not so diffident, and were by no means backward to appreciate her charms; but though the girl had a bright and pleasant way with them all, not one of them came near the silent Jim in her estimation. She and Una were silent now for a time; each thinking in her heart of marriage, and of what it would mean to them. So much it would mean to Kathie, so little to Una. The one looking forward to such a possibility with a thrilling heart; painting it in rosy colours; the other wondering how little necessary change it would make in her life, and sincerely hoping that she would still be left to follow her own desires. The girls parted from each other with the words—

“I'm sure I hope you'll be happy, Missy.”

“I mean to be, Kathie, and quite expect I shall.”

Una was very quiet for the next few days, and eluded Cuthbert's society. Then the weather changed;

black storm-clouds rolled in from the sea; rain and wind set in; and Una found her thoughts full of other matters. For the time she was oblivious of her engagement.

The storm rose to its height one day after dinner was over; the waves dashed and roared at the foot of the Towers; and the wind swept along the coast, lashing every obstacle in its way. Una slipped out of the drawing-room, where she and Miss Endicott sat in state, waiting for the gentlemen to join them, and dashing up to her room, opened the window and looked out. Her bedroom, chosen by herself, was at the top of one of the turret towers, and from the window she commanded an extensive view of the coast. It was a dark night; but as she gazed out on sea, she suddenly saw a rocket shoot up into the sky, and by its light she caught sight of a large brig drifting helplessly towards the shore.

“Another wreck!” she gasped. “It is on the Perran Rocks, so there is no hope for it.”

Then, tossing off her evening dress, with lightning rapidity she donned her old serge, wrapped a plaid round her shoulders, and pulling her worsted cap over her brown curly head, she ran lightly down the turret stairs and reached her sanctum.

From thence she soon made her way down to the beach, heedless of wind and rain, and was soon in view of the fated vessel. There was a little gathering of men and women on the shore. Una stole up amongst them very quietly. It was difficult to hear any one’s

voice in the roar of the waves that dashed in volumes of white spray against the rocks. Another rocket appeared, and for one second showed to the onlookers the crew gathered together in the fo'castle. Then a great hoarse shout went up from the doomed men, who were gliding so swiftly towards their death. Una's blood rushing to her cheeks. She cried out impulsively—

“Oh, let us try to save them! Are you going to watch them die? Will no one put out a boat?”

A low murmur went through the waiting crowd. One old fisherman turned angrily round—

“Could any boat get by them rocks, Missy? Ye talks as foolish as 'ee allays doth!”

“We could fling them a rope! We could do something.”

Again a sullen murmur from those around her. And then a young fellow said in a low voice in her ear—

“It is too late, Missy; no man could get past those rocks alive!”

“Oh, Jim, why didn't you try something!”

“Hist, Missy!”

His tone was a warning one. He left the crowd and fell back behind the hulk of an old fishing boat. Una followed him there. Her eyes were flashing with indignant feeling.

“Jim, did you try nothing?” she demanded.

“Ay, Missy,” the young man replied with deep bitterness of feeling. “Fayther an' me went to get our

ropes, an' found 'em cut to pieces. Us had our rockets ready, an' 'twould have saved some on 'em!"

"Oh, the fiends!" gasped Una. "Who did it?"

"Us have our suspicions!" the young man answered cautiously. Then he added, "'Tis of no use ye bein' here, Missy. Best be out of it!"

"I shall be here if I like," and Una brought down her small foot with a defiant stamp. "Do you think I could lie in my bed while murder and theft are being committed? I have my eyes and ears open; and if once I have positive proof of what I know goes on, I will expose it! I am not a helpless woman any longer. Mr. Endicott is home—and another!"

"Hist, Missy!" said Jim Tanner again.

At this moment there was another fierce onslaught of wind and waves; and then a heart-rending cry from the brig rose to the heavens. A sharp, grinding concussion, then, with a sudden dip, the brig sank within their sight; the strong current round the rocks sucked her greedily down; and her crew were engulfed in the raging pitiless deep without a hand being outstretched on their behalf.

The crowd on the beach broke up; two men passed close by Una.

"If there was a chance o' her bein' Captin Davey's he were bringin' stores from furrin parts!"

"Ay, 'tis a chance. 'Twill bring those that looks for 'un somethin' good! Us be in luck's way this year. 'Tis wreck number three!"

Una shivered. She turned to Jim, but he had dis-

appeared. Then with determination in her closely-shut lips, the girl quietly followed a little knot of men, who were making their way slowly and cautiously towards the treacherous rocks. They were so busy in consultation that she slipped past them without being perceived, and very silently she crept up a narrow gully in the cliffs that led to a small cave. Here, wrapping her plaid more closely round her, she sat down and waited. She was exactly opposite the wreck, and to her excited fancy it seemed as if far out in the water some of the crew were still struggling for their lives.

“Oh,” she murmured between her clenched teeth, “a lifeboat would weather this storm, however strong the currents were. We watch them die, and we gloat over their dead bodies. It is awful!”

CHAPTER V.

RESCUED FROM A WRECK

“The breakers were right beneath her bows,
She drifted a dreary wreck,
And a whooping billow swept the crew
Like icicles from her deck.

She struck where the white and fleecy waves
Looked soft as carded wool,
But the cruel rocks, they gored her side
Like the horns of an angry bull.”

Longfellow.

It was a gruesome watch. Here in the solitude of her cave she saw the dim forms of two or three men waiting greedily for spoils to be washed ashore. Two had torches; and presently a huge wave bore in some dark objects. There was a rush; one dragged his burden up to the very entrance of the cave in which Una was. She crouched in her hiding-place, and shuddered as she beheld old Martin turn over eagerly the lifeless body of a man. He rifled his pockets; she saw the gleam of watch and chain being transferred into Martin's keeping; she saw a belt being undone, and heard the chink of money. But she kept perfectly silent, and as other spoils were being washed ashore, Martin left his prey and joined his companions. Some instinct made Uná creep down softly towards the drowned man. She stood looking at him with tears

of pity in her eyes. Only a short time ago he stood in health and strength, the blood rushing through his veins, his eyes bright and sparkling, his voice strong and vigorous. Now he lay there face downwards on the sand, hushed in death's grip, a still and lifeless corpse.

As she gazed at him she noted that his dress and figure was not that of a common sailor; he was a gentleman; his clothes, his hands proclaimed the fact. And then in the silent darkness she started violently. She could not be mistaken; a low breathed sigh, almost a moan, came from that still form.

Una had truly said to her guardian that she was afraid of nothing. In an instant she was down on her knees chafing the cold hands and trying to feel if his heart were still beating. And in a minute a very feeble fluttering motion told her that life was not yet extinct. Then she sprang to her feet, feeling her helplessness; and running swiftly but noiselessly out of her hiding-place, she made her way round to the shore, where groups of fisherwomen and a few boys were still talking. She passed them, and then found the one for whom she was looking. Jim Tanner was leaning against the wall. He was alone, and Una touched him gently on the arm.

“Jim, follow me at once; there's one of the crew alive. I daren't let any one know it, for he has been robbed. Come as quick as you can, and don't let them see you.”

Without a word Jim obeyed, and was soon by the

side of the drowned man. He took a flask from his pocket, and poured a little brandy into his mouth, and then began working his arms up and down in the orthodox fashion, Una standing breathlessly by.

Presently he turned to her.

“He’s coming round, Missy. I’ll hoist him on my back and carry him up to the cliff and get him home, where us’ll see to him. ’Tis gettin’ late. Don’t ’ee trouble to stay out any more.”

Jim was acting promptly. Una knew there was an opening at the farther end of the cave which led up to the top of the cliff, and with a sigh of relief she sped round to the beach again and home as fast as her feet could carry her.

She met Cuthbert as she was passing through the garden.

“I am on my way to bring you back,” he said. “Do you generally wander out on a stormy night in this fashion?”

Una turned her big troubled eyes upon him.

“Oh, I don’t know what I do,” she said in a distressed tone. “Do you know a vessel has been wrecked within sight and sound of us?”

Cuthbert looked startled.

“Mr. Endicott and I have been deep in a discussion on past history in the library; we have even been oblivious of the storm till we joined Miss Endicott, and found she was anxious for your re-appearance.”

“As if it matters about me!”

There was impatience and scorn in Una’s tone.

“But have the crew not been saved?”

“How could they be, when every one’s desire is that they should be drowned?”

Cuthbert looked at the girl’s flashing eyes and quivering lips with some wonder. He thought her overwrought and gave little heed to her words.

“It is such a dangerous coast,” he said musingly. “But why is there no lifeboat?”

“Ask Mr. Endicott. His father built one, and it was wilfully destroyed within a month of its presentation. No one has attempted to have another.”

She dashed past him into the house, and Cuthbert followed her more slowly. He did not see her again that evening. Both Mr. Endicott and his sister were so absorbed in arrangements for their coming journey to London that the news Cuthbert brought them did not interest them much.

“It is an awful coast,” said Mr. Endicott. “I have always felt we ought to have a lighthouse to warn passing vessels of our treacherous currents and rocks. But it is not often that vessels come so close. They are out of their course if they do so. We shall hear all about it to-morrow. Cuthbert, have you any plans for the future? I mean with regard to Una.”

“I am willing for the marriage as soon as it suits you,” the younger man replied.

“I shall be going to town the beginning of October—in another month, in fact. Will that be too soon?”

“Not if it suits Una.”

“You will speak to her to-morrow, my dear,” said Mr. Endicott, turning to his sister.

She assented quietly; and Una upstairs, pacing her room in a tumult of passion, pity, and interest in the shipwrecked crew, little thought how quietly her future was being discussed and settled.

The next morning was a contrast to the stormy night. Blue sky, and sun; only a ripple on the ocean that had dealt so cruelly with human beings a short time before.

Una was soon making her way across to Eagle’s Head in her own boat. She was anxious to hear of the rescued man, and was glad when she presently met Tom Tanner. He was a grave weather-beaten man, with short brown beard, and the same honest eyes that had been handed on to Jim. He pulled in close to Una, and answered her breathless inquiries in a low tone.

“He be all right, Missy. He be a young gent in such haste to be home that be shipped in this Norwegian barque. He calleth himself Duncan Thiselthwaite, an’ he liveth at Thiselthwaite Manor, nigh on fourteen mile from this part, I reckon. He be in terrible haste to push on, but fayther an’ me have telled him he be not fit to sit astride a horse for another four-and-twenty hours; an’ he have promised to bide wi’ we till to-morrow.”

“I am so glad,” said Una; but her tone was still anxious. “Has he asked any questions, Tom?”

“Yes, Missy, ’deed he hath, an’ it hath bin awk’ard

for we. Our Jim, he broughted him on his back, egsackly as he were a-lyin', an' when he asketh for his belt o' money, an' his watch, an' his two rings, an' his di'mond breast-pin, it looketh foolish to kep on sayin', 'twas the waves that dragged 'em off him. An' Jim, he be terrible down concarnin' it; an' feyther, he sent I to the spot to have a right-down sarch, an' that be my errand; but us an' ye knoweth a little more than that, Missy; an' 'tis an outrageous thing to know on these matters an' be tongue-tied!"

Then Una's colour rose, and her eyes flashed fire.

"But I shall not be tongue-tied, Tom; no one shall deprive me of speech. And I shall go straight to the thief and demand him to give up the stolen property. I am not going to have Jim suspected of stealing. The thief is bound to be discovered. Mr.—Mr. Thiselthwaite will not take the theft calmly; he will insist upon his property being found. I know the thief. I watched him strip him; and I shall go straight to him at once."

Tom hushed her, though there was no other boat or human creature in sight.

"Missy, they were hard at the drink last night, an' ye be bound to be cautious. 'Tis right down desperate they getteth after a stroke o' luck. 'Tis like robbin' a lion o' its prey to speak up to 'em like ye doeth. I fear 'twill set 'em terrible agen we, but 'tis not the first time, an' right be right an' wrang be wrang."

"I shall go straight to him," said Una, deftly turn-

ing her boat's head round. "And I shall bring back the things to Eagle's Head in an hour."

Tom began to expostulate, but Una set her lips determinedly together and left him, calling out—

"Your names shall not be brought into it. No one knows who rescued him."

She rowed back to the beach, and with the help of a fisher lad landed her boat, and with swift footsteps made her way up the village street till she reached a small cottage standing alone at the farther end of it. She knocked sharply at the closed door, and lifted the latch to open it, but found it locked.

A murmur of voices that reached her ear told her that Martin and his wife were at home.

After waiting for some minutes, the old woman opened the door very cautiously and put her head out.

"Eh, Missy, be it you? My Martin were up so late a tryin' to save they poor critturs that he be sleepin' now hard and fast, or I would ask 'ec to come inside."

"Then he must wake up at once," said Una in her most regal tone, "for I want to speak to him!"

"Eh, dearie me! But 'twill be easy for I to give 'un the message."

"No, it will not. I must see him at once, please. It is most important. I have come to save him from getting into trouble."

Martin's wife was a good bit older than himself. Her face was a mass of puckers and wrinkles. A frightened shifty look stole into her small grey eyes,

and she began to blink them furiously, as was her custom when nervous.

“Eh, Missy, ye be allays good to we! Maybe he’ll waken if ’ee bide a moment. Will ’ee come in an’ take a seat, an’ I’ll go to ’un?”

Una took a chair as desired in the small kitchen. Martin had prudently withdrawn to the inner bedroom, from whence he issued a few minutes later, looking heavy and surly with drink.

“You’re missing a fine shoal of mackerel this morning,” said Una severely, as she eyed him up and down. “All the others are out an hour ago.”

“Shouldn’t wonner!” growled Martin, with a scowl at her.

There was a pause. The door was ajar. Una turned and shut it. Then she came to her business promptly.

“Martin, that was a dreadful wreck last night!”

“Wrecks be mostly that,” was the dry reply.

“And only one passenger saved,” Una went on.

The old man looked up quickly, astonishment and fear dawning in his eyes.

“Yes, aren’t you glad to hear it? One who was left for dead recovered consciousness and is now inquiring for a belt of money, a watch and chain, two rings and a breastpin.”

She spoke slowly and emphatically, fixing her gaze steadily upon him.

An angry flush rose to the old man’s cheeks.

“An’ what do ’ee mean by comin’ to I wi’ such

tales?" he demanded furiously. "Best go to the parson who be hurryin' down to shore to bury the corses! What be it to I? Ye be wunnerful fond o' meddlin' wi' other folks' concarns, Missy, but ye will do it one time too often!"

"But this is my concern, for I found him alive and had him seen to, and I also happened to see you taking his things when you thought he was dead!"

A dreadful oath escaped Martin. He strode forward with fury in his eyes and looked as if he was going to strike the girl to the ground. Una did not flinch. She only drew her little head up very proudly.

"Take care, Martin. You are not too drunk to know who is speaking to you. I am not going to get you into trouble. I know the manners and customs of Perrancove better than you think. You are only one amongst many. I am not sorry for your disappointment, for though I have never caught you in the act before, I know you have had many a spoil from poor drowned men. Why I have come to you now is to demand Mr. Thiselthwaite's property at once. He is asking for it, and has been put off the scent by excuses. Unless I take these things instantly to him he will employ the coastguards from Polycarthew, and all your houses will be searched. I fancy then they will discover more than they look for. Now, make haste, and be angry with yourself for committing such a crime, and not with me for saving you from the consequences of it."

Martin was awed by Una's imperious words. Dulled though his senses were, he had common sense enough to see that he had no choice but to obey.

He shuffled off into the inner room muttering angrily—

“A unbeknownst copse be the property o' the finder. 'Tis allays my luck to lose my rightful earnin's. He were dead as a door-nail afore I touched 'un! Folks that drags dead corses to life won't be so smart at raisin' themselves when their time cometh! An' that time will be quicker than they think for if they spend their lives in robbin' honest men o' their rightful livin'!”

He banged the door behind him, and Una heard him swearing and cursing at his wife for the next five minutes. He did not appear again, and his wife came out with the articles in an old handkerchief, which she put into Una's hands with trembling fingers.

“Ye won't be too hard an' raise a stir on we, Missy. If so be the gent be stayin' at the Towers, don't 'ee let the squire know 'twere my Martin had the accident to pick up the bits that were washed off the poor gent's body.”

“You needn't be afraid,” said Una shortly. “If you have returned *everything* it will be all right, but if there is a shilling short in the money I shall bring Mr. Thiselthwaite to your cottage myself, and Mr. Endicott shall come too!”

“Every blessed penny be in your hands, Missy.”

“That’s all right. Good morning.”

Una left the house in relieved spirits, and it was not very long before she was pulling up to Eagle’s Head with the recovered spoil. She landed her boat, but met on the shore, not any of the Tanners, but Duncan Thiselthwaite himself.

He was pacing up and down the shingle—a tall, handsome young man, but his face had a worn white look. The effects of the shock of the preceding night had not yet passed off. He glanced at Una in some wonder; she went straight up to him.

“You are Mr. Thiselthwaite, are you not?”

He doffed his cap courteously.

“I have brought you your possessions. I hope you will find they are all right. Will you look at them now and tell me?”

“I am much more inclined to look at you,” said the young man, with admiration in his eyes, as a smile lit up his face and made Una think he was the handsomest man she had ever seen. “Are you a water-nymph or fairy, that you appear with what I thought was lost for ever?”

“Please, don’t ask questions, but tell me if your money is right.”

“It will take some time to count,” said Duncan, noting the impatience in the girl’s tone, and not unwilling to prolong the interview. “Shall we retire to the shelter of this old boat? I really am most

eternally grateful to you, but cannot conceive how you obtained possession.”

Una was silent. She watched him unfold the handkerchief and count out his money. He made short work of it.

“Perfectly correct. I am indeed indebted to you Miss——?”

“Una Carteret is my name. I don’t want any thanks. If you wish to oblige me, you will ask no questions; and do not show yourself in the village before you leave. You lost your money and jewellery in the sea. The sea has given them up. And be quite sure that the young man who saved your life, and his relations, are as honest as yourself. Good morning.”

She ran back to the water’s edge, pushed off her boat, and Duncan Thiselthwaite stood watching her as if he were in a dream.

He gave himself a shake presently.

“Whatever she is, she is flesh and blood, and—muscle! I never saw a girl pull as she does. It is a mystery I am not to solve. Well, if I am not to investigate this neighborhood, the sooner I am gone the better, and the sooner these good folks get the loan of a horse, the better I shall be pleased. Poor little Clarice! Ill news travels fast. She will hear of my death before I reach her!”

CHAPTER VI.

UNITED HANDS

“Marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.”

Shakespeare, *Henry VI.*

It was the day before Una's wedding-day. Outside, it was grey and misty. The gulls flew screaming round the windows. In the old drawing-room, a disconsolate little figure sat by the fire with a prayer-book in her hand. The bustle of her trousseau was over. 'All arrangements for the coming event were finished. Miss Endicott had worked and toiled with a will and purpose; and finding Una wandering aimlessly over the house, getting into every one's way, and distracting the maids by her advice and directions, had sent her into the drawing-room and told her to stay there.

“Sit down and meditate upon your approaching marriage. It is well for young girls to have quiet thoughts and earnest resolves upon such an event.”

So Una had disconsolately obeyed. Sitting still and meditating was not much to her taste; but she bent her mind to the task, and finally thought it would be a good idea to read through the service in which she was about to take part so soon. She read with

knitted brows, and sat with her chin in her hands reflecting.

Then, as rapid in her action as in her thoughts, she left the room hastily in search of Cuthbert. She found him alone in the library, but he was not studying. He was reading a newspaper by the fire.

"I have come to look for you," Una said, advancing somewhat shyly, and holding her prayer-book open between finger and thumb.

"What can I do for you?" said Cuthbert, drawing a chair up for her opposite himself. As he looked at her fair girlish face, and met an almost childish look of appeal in her eyes, he wondered again if he were doing rightly by her.

"Miss Endicott told me to sit down and think over what I was going to do to-morrow," Una said simply. "I've been doing it, and—I'm a little bit afraid of it, to tell the truth. I thought you would be the best person to consult, as of course you will have to go through the same. It seems to me such a much more solemn thing than I thought it was."

Cuthbert felt inclined to smile, but did not. There was a side to Una's character that was as yet unknown to him. He only saw her naïve childishness and simplicity, but it pleased him.

"It is a great step," he said gravely; "but I don't think you will have anything to fear. What is it that perplexes you?"

"It is the promise I have to make. I didn't know

‘love’ was mentioned at all. It is four times repeated. We each have to promise it twice.”

“Well?”

Cuthbert put down his paper. There was an amused light in his eyes.

“I don’t love you,” she said, looking at him doubtfully.

“But you don’t dislike me?”

“Oh, no. I rather like you. At least, I like one or two things about you.”

“Let me hear them.”

“Well—I like the look of you. I like to see you striding along when you walk out of doors. You don’t slouch; your figure is as good and as upright as Jim Tanner’s. Kathie said the other day, if a man didn’t look a man he needn’t look at her! You are manly, and you are tidy in your appearance, and you dress well; not like our vicar, who is always in greasy black coats and crumpled ties.”

“Thank you. Anything else?”

“Yes. I don’t think you are stupid. Don’t laugh! I can’t bear stupid, heavy people who can never see a joke. Then I think you know more than I do. About *some* things, not all.”

“That is high praise. On the whole I satisfy you?”

Una looked down at her prayer-book, which she still kept fingering.

“I don’t love you,” she repeated; “not as I love my dog ‘Victor.’ ”

“I am thankful for that mercy,” murmured Cuthbert.

“Then you think it will be all right?” she asked wistfully.

“I feel sure it will be,” said Cuthbert with an encouraging smile. “Do not trouble your head over words. If you do not hate a person you are quite safe.”

She brightened visibly.

“There is just one other thing I want to say. If we get tired of each other, I suppose we can go away from each other?”

“For good and all, do you mean? It would be awkward.”

“Only for a time. Of course I don’t see why we should, for if you go your way and I mine, we shall not be likely to interfere with each other. But I want to be prepared for the future. I think it would be easy to part for about four or five months, and then it would prevent monotony.”

“I don’t think that it will be necessary.”

“But I might want to do it. I don’t like the sentence ‘Till death us do part.’ It makes me shiver!”

“It is not too late now for you to alter your mind,” he said, looking at her seriously. “Do not tell me after that I forced you into it.”

“You forget that I have promised to marry you. I don’t want to alter my mind.”

Her small head was held proudly.

“I should not look forward to the future,” he said.

“I promise you I shall not give you more of my company than you desire.”

Una put down her prayer-book on the table, with a sigh of relief.

“It is sure to be all right,” she said. “Uncle said I could trust you.”

Cuthbert felt a slight compunction in his heart. “Come here, Una,” he said gently.

She came and stood by his side. He put his arm round her, the nearest approach to a caress that he had ever given her.

“I have become rather a silent taciturn fellow,” he said. “I have sometimes wondered whether I am doing right in taking away your liberty so soon; but I honestly think I can take care of you, and I hope I shall make you happy.”

“You are not taking away my liberty,” said Una hastily. “I would not marry you if you were. You promised me I should boat, and fish, and do just as I always have.”

“So you shall, but you must not forget that I shall prevent your marrying any other man who may turn up.”

“No men do turn up here—no gentlemen—at least, not often.”

She stopped, and her thoughts flew to that handsome young man who had come into her life and left it again so suddenly. She sometimes wondered if she should ever meet him again.

“I saved his life, but he didn’t know it. If I had not been there he would have died; and he is living now because of me.”

Her cheeks flushed as she thought of him. Cuthbert did not notice it. He was feeling now what a child she was; what a responsibility was his if he spoiled her life.

“Una,” he said tenderly, “give me a kiss and tell me you will try to love me.”

Una’s thoughts came back from Duncan Thiselthwaite, and she stared at him in astonishment.

“I don’t like kissing,” she said; “it always seems so babyish. I kiss little children, and Miss Endicott kisses me, but I should never think of kissing any one else.”

Cuthbert felt decidedly snubbed.

“You will have to kiss me to-morrow,” he said nonchalantly, “or let me kiss you.”

“It will be very silly if you do,” was Una’s reply. “I certainly shall not kiss you. I will keep that for when you’re very ill or weak. I might do it then, if you wanted me to.”

“Pity is akin to love,” murmured Cuthbert, as he released his affianced bride, and took up his paper again. “It is a good thing that I can live and be happy without either.”

Una left him, but though his eyes were on his paper, his thoughts were still on her.

The wedding day dawned bright and fair. It was a very quiet little ceremony, and when over, Cuthbert took his young bride away for a week to London. That **was** a time of mixed happiness and bewilderment to Una. She loved the sight-seeing, the shops,

the crowds of people; but she was not in her element, and the day before they returned to Perrancove she turned to her husband pathetically. "I am a stranger in a strange land," she said; "I am dizzy and confused with it all. People think me an ignorant rustic when I make any remark. I feel like a bird in a cage. Take me home. I shall never be happy here."

"Not with me?" questioned Cuthbert.

"You are the strangest part of it all," said Una, softening her words by laying her hand gently on his coat-sleeve. "I can't get accustomed to you, and we are so *very* much together. I have never had to talk so much in my life before, and it seems *years* since we were married."

Cuthbert winced a little; but he was not in love with his wife. He was kindly indulgent to her, and felt in his inmost soul that he too would be glad when this short honeymoon would be over.

Mr. and Miss Endicott had not left the Towers when they returned. Mr. Endicott's disease had taken a serious turn, and he had been confined to his bed for some days. It proved only a temporary check, however, and he was able to receive them in the library with great composure.

When alone with Cuthbert his manner changed.

"I am going up to town to-morrow, Cuthbert," he said; "and I am going up to die. Soul and body shrinks from it, and yet it is inevitable. How would you feel if you were in my place?"

Cuthbert's brows knitted. He walked the room uneasily. His reply sounded a feeble one.

"I should not like it."

Mr. Endicott gazed at him meditatively.

"I wish you and your little wife had a religion of your own," he said at length.

"I am not a heathen," Cuthbert said hastily.

"Your creed is an empty one, is it not? Your belief brings you no comfort; no power in life?"

"I have not felt weak. My will and self-control are my good angels. Comfort I have not needed."

"Since my illness I have learnt that our Creator meant His creatures to have a higher destiny down here than the majority of us think. My life has been wasted in raking straws together; the corn has been untouched."

Cuthbert looked at his friend rather sadly.

"You have gleaned more than straw," he protested, waving his hand towards the pile of manuscripts and books on the table near him.

Mr. Endicott shook his head.

"I have brought some ancient history to light," he said; but the dead past is not so important as the living future. For I am going to live, Cuthbert—how and where I know not; and yet the oldest book in the world tells me it will be in paradise with the One whom I have only just begun to know."

There was silence. Then Mr. Endicott held out his hand.

"Give me your word that you will meet me again,

lad. I have found the 'Way, the Truth, and the Life.' Set your heart to find Him too, and lead your wife."

"God helping me I will," said Cuthbert, deeply moved.

Una had a last interview with her guardian.

"Are you happy, child?"

"I am delighted to be home again. Cuthbert is very kind and good. He says he will be busy now with your book, so we shall not see much of each other."

She spoke cheerfully. Mr. Endicott looked at her; then drew a long breath.

"You have youth, and health, and strength. Don't waste them as I have wasted mine; think of others' happiness before your own, and be loyal and true to your husband. He deserves your trust. Look after my tenants more than I have done."

He could say no more, and Una, as she looked at his white suffering face, felt her eyes fill with tears."

"Oh! I hope the doctors will make you better," she said passionately. "They *must*. We shall see you back here again. I will do all you wish!"

But she and Cuthbert had looked for the last time on the face of the dying man as he drove away from the Towers with his sister.

Only three weeks afterwards they heard of his death, and they both felt that they had lost a friend who could not be replaced.

“And now I have no one but you to look after me,” said Una, going into her husband’s study after the sad news had been brought to her. “Miss Endicott tells me she is going back to her own home. It seems so strange to be here without her.”

Cuthbert did not answer for a minute. His thoughts were with his friend; then he turned to his young wife very gently—

“We will try and follow out his wishes and meet him in the Great Beyond.”

Una nodded, with a little sob.

“He seemed so very good, didn’t he? I remember he asked me what my religion did for my life and soul! He made me think I ought to believe in something more than I do. I can’t get his words out of my head. I wish I knew the way to be really good.”

Cuthbert was silent. His heart was moved and softened, but what could he say? At last, with an effort, he spoke—

“I will go to church with you next Sunday, Una. I haven’t been inside a place of worship for years. It is the correct thing to do, I believe.”

Una’s face did not brighten. Church was not much enjoyment to her. But Cuthbert felt he had made a grand step in the right direction; and then he asked her to leave him.

Husband and wife saw very little of each other, except at meal-times. Una was out of doors the greater part of each day. She did not neglect her

household. Miss Endicott had trained her too carefully for that. After breakfast she spent a couple of hours in the kitchen and still-room. The rest of the day she had to herself. Kathie saw very little change in the young bride. She could get no satisfactory information out of her.

“Aren’t you afraid of losing your wedding ring?” she asked her one day, when they were both baiting some lobster-pots from the same boat, and Una’s gold-encircled finger was flashing in and out of the water.

“No, it wouldn’t matter if I did. Cuthbert would get me another one.”

“Oh, but think of the awful ill-luck! Why, that ring is part of himself! I would feel my finger thrillin’ through if I had one on!”

“Oh, Kathie, you are so silly!”

And Una’s laugh rang out merrily.

Kathie looked serious.

“I don’t understand you, Missy! You are no different to what you used to be, and—and it seemeth to me strange. Don’t you feel restless and heart-weary to be with him?”

“I shouldn’t think so! I tell you, Kathie, that London visit is like a nightmare to me now! I was so nervous that I couldn’t walk a step anywhere without him. He never left me alone. It was so tiring! We were so glad to be back. He loves his books. I love my boat. And we’re both as happy as we can be!”

She looked it, as she flashed a merry glance across at her humble friend. Kathie shook her head, sighed, and said no more.

Husband and wife walked to church together the first Sunday after Mr. Endicott's death. Cuthbert felt he was doing a virtuous action. He did not expect to be helped there, and apparently he was not.

Mr. Preston, the old clergyman, had an indistinct and monotonous delivery. The service was dull and dreary; the sermon lengthy and dry. But some words in the second lesson attracted and held Una's attention.

"....The way ye know.

"Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way."

She began to think over them.

Mr. Endicott had gone into the unseen world; he seemed to have known the way. It was not a thing of dread to him. Did she know the way? No. And this disciple did not. What did Christ mean by saying he was the way? She puzzled over it and kept repeating over to herself as she walked home by her husband's side—

"Ye know the way....I am the way."

"I will ask old Eli about it," she said at last aloud.

"What are you going to ask Eli about?" questioned her husband.

“Oh, only something that is puzzling me. I would rather ask him things than any one I know. He is an old dear!”

Cuthbert smiled and said no more.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TREASURE OF THE WITCHES' HOLE

“’Tis sweet to behold, when the billows are sleeping,
Some gay-coloured bark moving gracefully by;
No damp on her deck, but the even-tide’s weeping,
No breath in her sails, but the summer wind’s sigh.

Yet who would not turn with a fonder emotion,
To gaze on the lifeboat, though rugged and worn,
Which often hath wafted, o’er hills of the ocean,
The lost light of hope to the seaman forlorn?”

Moore.

“Cuthbert, I want some money.”

It was Una who spoke. She stood in the old library one morning, and made this request with a mixture of shyness and audacity in her tone.

Her husband looked up from his books a little irritably.

“Why did you not ask me at breakfast? For housekeeping, I suppose?”

“Oh, no, indeed. I want a big sum. I want a hundred pounds.”

“What on earth for?”

“Well, it is to get some things for my workshop—for boat building. I have been wanting it for ever so long, and since you have told me that Mr. Endicott has left all his property to me in his will, I thought I should like that sum at once.”

Cuthbert pushed aside his writing and looked at her.

“That is a large sum to fritter away on your amusements.”

For the first time since their marriage Una lost her temper.

Her eyes flashed indignantly.

“I am the best judge of whether I fritter it away. It is my money, and if I had not married you I should have spent it as I liked. I am not a child, though I don't know much about business, and I think it is very hard that I should not be able to have money when I need it!”

“Softly, softly,” Cuthbert said, gently. “I am quite willing to give you some. There is a big balance at the bank only waiting to be drawn upon. I have not gone into the matter with you yet, but have intended doing so. I think the best plan would be for you to have a certain sum each quarter.”

Una's anger died away as quickly as it came.

“I don't mean to be cross,” she said, in tones of contrition, as she drew near to the table; “but I want this money very much, and you mustn't prevent my having it. I want it to-day. How can I get it? Have you got it in the house?”

“Tell me exactly what you want to do with it?”

Una hesitated.

“No, I can't do that, for I don't quite know; but it will not be wasted. Don't ask me any more questions, please, about it; but give it to me.”

She spoke imperiously. Cuthbert was beginning to find that she could not always be managed like a child.

He shrugged his shoulders.

“You shall have it,” he said; “but I hope that sometimes you will be advised by me as to the disposal of your income. You do not yet know the value of money.”

“I daresay I don’t,” said Una merrily, her good humour having been quite restored; “but that I shall learn by spending!”

Cuthbert said no more. Though at that time a married woman’s property was entirely at her husband’s disposal, he was strictly conscientious concerning his wife’s income. He would not touch a penny of it himself, and regarded it as a sacred trust from his dead friend. He sat down and wrote a cheque for a hundred pounds, which he handed to his wife in silence. She took it with a radiant smile.

“Thank you, Cuthbert; I assure you I shall not waste it.”

“That afternoon she rowed over the water to the Witches’ Hole, singing gaily as her boat shot along.

Martin and some of his companions watched her from the shore as they lounged outside the “Blue Lobster,” and Martin’s tone was surly as he said: “There be Missy agen goin’ to that there cursed place; ’twill sarve her right if some harm do come to

she. The maid knoweth too much an' feareth too little!"

Una certainly seemed to have no fear for the ill-omened cove. She drew up her boat right under the green slimy cliff, and pushed her way up a long narrow gully. At first it appeared as if she were penetrating into thick darkness, but she knew every inch of the way, and presently, after creeping through a low opening in the rock, she stood upright in a high vaulted cave. Light streamed in from above, and it seemed as if she had come into a carpenter's workshop.

There was the framework of a large boat in the centre. Old Eli Tanner was hammering away at it, his grandson aiding him; and they both looked up with expectation in their faces as Una came in sight.

"I have got it," she cried gaily; "I have really got it. Where is Tom?"

"Gone fishin' wi' the rest, Missy," replied the old man; "'twill not do for all we to be nowheres when a mackerel shoal be in sight!"

"Martin and several of the others are back. I saw them as I came along. Tom can go straight off to-morrow and bring back all you want. We shall not be stopped any longer for want of money."

A gleam of light seemed to cross Jim's grave face. His grandfather was more demonstrative. "The dear Lord be praised, Missy! Us have had our need supplied at the right minit."

Una was rolling up her serge sleeves in a business-like way. She went straight to the part of the boat that had been apportioned to her, and taking up her hammer set to work with a will; talking as fast as her nimble little hands were moving.

“How soon do you think we shall finish her, Eli? I am looking forward to her christening. What shall we call her? I’ve been trying to settle upon a nice name. ‘Victory’ is too common. What do you think, Jim? I know the name you would like, but I think a lifeboat is such a very special thing that it ought to have a special name.”

“There be time for her name, Missy; her’ll take a brave bit o’ days yet afore her be ready for her christenin’.”

“I lie awake at night thinking of her,” pursued Una; “and longing for the time when we shall launch her. And then sometimes I get afraid that our secret will be discovered. What would they say if they knew what we are doing? How furious they would be!”

“’Tis the place will be her safety,” said Eli, shaking his head wisely. “No boy nor man for miles roun’ the coast will come nigh the Witches’ Hole. The curse will turn into a blessin’, I be thinking. Jim heerd tell in the village yestere’en, that Jock Pengaff had been close by Sandy’s Cave, an the current had drifted ’im nearer this Hole than he fancied, an’ he come back shakin’ as if wi’ ague, and says he: ‘Twas nigh on eleven o’clock at night an’ I heerd the



TAKING UP HER HAMMER SHE SET TO WORK WITH A WILL.

hammerin' o' coffins come from the Witches' Hole, an' the sweat ran off me, as I thought 'twas a warnin' to them that ventured nigh!' Tom an' Jim were workin' a bit late, for they had bin out all day; an' us said when us heerd the story, that Jock have helped us wonnerful by his fright!"

Una nodded, with an amused sparkle in her eyes. Jim presently left them, and she worked on with Eli, full of hope and bright anticipation of the day when their work would be completed, and a lifeboat would be launched to save a shipwrecked crew.

This work of theirs had been long in hand. Tom Tanner had followed his father's trade, and was a boatbuilder: he had made several secret expeditions to a firm of shipbuilders, with whom he had worked for some years. He had helped to turn out many a lifeboat for different parts of the coast, and from the time he settled in Perrancove, and saw the need for such a craft, his one ambition was to make one, Una and he concocted the scheme together. Eli and Jim were pressed into their service, and for months past they had been steadily and silently at work. They knew their only hope was to keep their plans to themselves, for if any of the fishers knew about it certain destruction would follow their efforts. And they had made use of the Witches' Hole to this end. Superstition and fear would keep all, save themselves, at a distance. Una spent all her pocket-money, and the greater part of her time on this object. She was cautious and wary in the extreme, and did not often

venture across in her boat to the entrance of the cave. Her usual way was along the top of the cliffs. Thick gorse bushes hid the aperture above the cave from view; but once having pushed her way through them, a rope ladder led her down in safety, and she had descended so often that she could find her way in the dark as easily as in the day.

Lately the work had almost come to a standstill. Materials were wanting, and materials that were costly. Una's heart sank, until she remembered that she was now a woman of property, and hence her interview with her husband.

She worked on now, a happy smile on her lips; and then suddenly she turned to Eli—

“Let us call her the *Triumph*, Eli; don't you think it will suit her?”

“Ay, Missy; but let her be built afore us nameth her. Please God, her'll be a saviour to many.”

There was silence for a minute, then the old man said with a smile—

“Seemeth to me, Missy, as I worketh at her, her be a true pictur' of our dear Lord, and the world's need. There be a many out o' their course, and drifting towards destruction, and there be no help for they, save in the grand old Lifeboat. There be those lurin' 'em on, like some that us knows on a lurin' the vessels on by false lights!”

“Wretches!” muttered Una.

“An' there be few that are willin', and none able to save 'em,” continued Eli, his rugged and expressive

old face lighting up with enthusiasm as he spoke. "But thank the good God, His Lifeboat was finished long, long ago, and It cruises near every sinkin' soul that'll lay hold on It."

Una looked thoughtful.

"What is the way to be good, Eli? I mean to be sure of heaven, and to be a true Christian, and to believe really what you say you believe?"

"Step into the Lifeboat," said Eli, turning his eyes full on the young questioner, with a glad ring in his voice. "Step right in, Missy. 'Tis a grand rest and safety to a storm-tossed, sinkin' soul."

"But I'm not sinking or storm-tossed," said Una perplexedly, "and I don't want a rest."

"Which way be you sailin', Missy? Not towards Heaven's port, be 'ee?"

"I don't know. I want to sail that way."

"Ye be out o' your course, and ye'll never stem the current an' avoid the rocks. 'Tis when us sees oursel's to be sinkin' that us be glad of the Lifeboat; 'tis when us knows us be lost, that us be glad to find the way."

"Then I shall have to wait till I'm sinking, Eli. I am not near that now."

Eli shook his head and murmured—

"May the Lord open hern eyes to see where her be driftin' to!"

Una only just reached home in time for dinner. Cuthbert was gradually getting more and more absorbed in his book. He was absent and *distract* at

meals. The writing fever had seized him. Una sat opposite to him, in a low-necked, short-waisted gown of white brocade, looking in her fair beauty like some pretty child. Her bright brown hair rolled off her broad brow in rebellious curls and waves, that could not be controlled. As she eyed her husband up and down through her long lashes on this night, she began to long for a little more attention, and soon she spoke somewhat impatiently—

“Cuthbert!”

“Yes?”

“Do speak to me, I am so dull. Miss Endicott used to talk to me much more than you do!”

“My dear child, I am not Miss Endicott. You naturally would have more things in common with her than with me.”

“Why?”

Cuthbert moved his head impatiently.

“Because you were two women.”

“And can’t husbands and wives ever interest each other as well as two women?”

“Well, what am I to talk to you about? Your doves, or your dog; your lobster-pots or your shrimp-ing nets?”

“Now you are scornful!”

“Indeed I am not. You forget what a great work occupies my time and thoughts. I have no room for the little things that make your life.”

He was not looking at her; he did not see the proud young head raised in pained protest; the curl to the

sensitive lips. He only heard her voice which was meekness personified.

“My little life is so interesting to me, that I forget it cannot be interesting to you.”

“What have you been doing to-day?” asked Cuthbert, with an effort to make himself agreeable.

“Oh, the usual things,” responded Una, with a sparkle in her eyes.

There was a silence. Cuthbert glanced at his young wife, and thought what an innocent child she was.

“You must not mind my absorption, Una. You cannot enter into my work, nor realize what a boon some of my dear friend’s discoveries will be to the scientific world. The work I am engaged upon is no selfish one; it will throw light upon many a hidden treasure, and bring knowledge of the past to many earnest seekers. More I cannot tell you. I believe it will benefit the world at large, and my toil and labour will not be in vain if I shall be able, in this way, to help my fellow beings. You are glad, are you not, that your husband is no idler?”

“Oh, yes, very glad,” said Una, feeling rebuked and ashamed at having tried to lead her husband’s thoughts away from such a work.

“What a clever scholar he is!” she thought to herself. “And perhaps one day when this wonderful book is printed, and everybody will be praising the author, and all the world will be the better for it, perhaps, then, I shall better understand the honour it is to be his wife!”

A day or two after this, Una met Kathie in sore trouble. Her grandmother, who had been old and ailing for some time past, had died suddenly in the night.

It had been a great shock to the young girl; and she broke down and wept when telling Una about it.

“Her be the last of my people, Missy, and I’m left lone and forlorn, and will have nobody of my own to be with me. And I mind now how quick-tempered I have been to granny, and how vexed at times when her spoke for my good. I shall never have so good a friend agen as her!”

Una tried to comfort her.

“Are you going to keep the cottage on, Kathie? You can’t live there all alone.”

“And why not, Missy? There be only one mouth to feed now. Poor granny earned nothin’ and her got but **two** shillin’ a week from the parson. I shall not miss that. I be young and strong, an’ can live by what the **sea** brings me as well as any lad in Perran-cove.”

But another had a word to say to this arrangement. Jim Tanner stepped up to Kathie one evening as she sat on the low stone wall outside her cottage and cleaned out her net for to-morrow’s fishing. He looked at the young girl’s graceful figure, her handsome sun-burnt face, and noted the softened wistful expression in her usually laughing eyes, as she turned them full upon him.

“Good evenin’, Jim.”

“Good evenin’.”

Jim straightened himself; he took his pipe out of his mouth as if about to speak; then he put it in again and puffed away in silence, leaning on the wall and looking out over the sea.

Kathie bent her head to hide the blushes that mounted in her soft cheeks. She was saying in her heart—

“He is leanin’ on my wall, touchin’ it as if he loved it, as if ’twas home to him. I’d like this moment to keep right on without movin’ for a year! Him standin’ there and lookin’ so bravely strong an’ beautiful! Me sittin’ within an arm’s length of him, an’—an’ almost hearin’ him breathe!”

Then after a silence Jim took his pipe out and spoke.

“’Tis lonely for a maid this end o’ the village. Be ’ee meanin’ to live on here?”

“Yes,” Kathie said nervously, detaching a long strand of green seaweed from the meshes of her net. “I’m goin’ to live on just the same, Jim.”

Another silence, then—

“I be thinkin’ o’ settin’ up home for myself, an’ Jock Pengaff be givin’ up his place, for ’tis too small for his family.”

Kathie’s breath came short and quick; then she raised her head and tried to speak indifferently—

“That be news indeed, Jim. My good wishes for ye.”

Jim turned and looked at her without speaking; a long searching look that drew Kathie's eyes to his and kept them fastened there.

"Shall us keep house together, Kathie?"

The words were out, and the young fisher's tone was husky with emotion.

Kathie dropped her net, and then hid her face in her arms. Jim dropped his pipe, trampled on it, broke it, but paid no heed; his arms were holding tight the love of his heart; his brown tanned cheek touching hers, and his lips pleading his cause with silent eloquence.

Kathie's eyes were full of tears, her heart throbbing violently.

Oh Jim!" she whispered, "every bit of me be yours forever!"

And Jim replied, as he clasped her closer—

"And none but God shall ever take 'ee from me!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A VISITOR

“Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never once offends;
Bright as the sun her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike:
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget them all.”

Pope.

Husband and wife sat at breakfast at the Towers. Letters had been brought in, and Cuthbert was perusing a small packet with a perplexed and frowning brow. Una never received letters. Occasionally Miss Endicott had enclosed a note for her in business correspondence with her husband; but Una was not a writer, and she had no other friends. Her gaze was now out of the window watching the gulls flying round one of the turrets. Her thoughts were with her treasure in the Witches' Hole.

She started when her husband addressed her.

“Una, I have had some startling news. A sister of mine is without a home, and wants to come here for a time. •

Una's eyes were big with astonishment.

“I never knew you had a sister,” she said.

“No, I have not told you of my family. I have only

this one sister. We were separated from each other as children. She went to America with a cousin who adopted her. We were both left orphans at an early age. I spent my boyhood at school, and my master and his wife were my only friends till I left them. This cousin of ours is dead. My sister has come over to England to seek me out. She was in London last week at our lawyer's, and she is travelling down here now. She may be here any day. You must make her welcome."

"Of course I will. I shall be delighted. It is quite exciting. Is she about my age? What is her name?"

"There is her letter," said Cuthbert, handing it as he spoke. "You will do all that is necessary for her accommodation, and let me know when she arrives. I have a great deal to get through to-day, so I do not wish to be disturbed."

He left the room, and Una took the letter to the window. The writing was fine and delicate; the paper sweetly scented. She with difficulty could read the contents. It was written in the conventional and stilted fashion of the day, and concluded:

"Your affectionate unknown sister,
"MARJORIE."

"Marjorie!" Una repeated to herself. "A soft-sounding, pretty name. How nice it is to have a relation! How strange that she should not know her own brother!"

She occupied herself that day by getting everything

ready for the comfort of the coming guest; but the day came and went without any sign of her.

Una and her husband were just rising from the dinner table that evening, when the great door bell rang out.

“It is your sister!” exclaimed Una, and she ran out into the hall.

It was Marjorie at last. She had ridden over with an old serving man from Kingstawton, where she had arrived some hours previously by coach. She was enveloped in furs and wraps; but she threw them off with a silvery laugh on an old oak settle in the hall.

“I am not very presentable,” she said, advancing towards her brother, “for I am blue and stiff with cold. I am mightily pleased to find myself at last under your roof.”

“You are most welcome, sister,” was Cuthbert’s grave reply. “Let me introduce you to my wife.”

The girls touched each other’s hands, and scrutinized one another as only women can. Una saw before her a slight small fairy-like figure, with a quantity of fair hair that looked like spun flax, and a complexion that reminded one of milk and roses. She was dressed in a travelling costume of green cloth and silver brocade, a velvet hat with long ostrich plumes drooped on her shoulders. Her face puzzled Una; at first sight she seemed almost a child, but when standing under the large lamp in the hall, her features, though delicate, were strongly marked, and there were

tired lines about mouth and eyes that showed she was not in the first bloom of youth.

Marjorie in her turn was surprised at Una's fresh innocent face, and sparkling vivacity. She said little till she had refreshed herself with a meal, and had thoroughly warmed herself at the great log fire in the dining room; then she turned to her brother, who had been regarding her with some perplexity.

"Well, Cuthbert, are you pleased with me? What strangers we are! I do not even know whether you are grave or gay, clever or foolish; loving or eschewing women's society! Shall I turn to your little wife for your character, or will you give it to me yourself?"

"Oh, I will give it to you," said Una, readily, "for I feel I have known him years. You see we have been married nearly two months. He is clever, and I think graver than when I first knew him, but then he is quite absorbed in his books. He loves books better than women, and you will only see him at meal times."

Cuthbert laughed at his wife's quaint, but true description of him.

"I am busy writing a book," he said, "so have not much time to give to other pursuits. Una will make you comfortable, Marjorie; and you and she will be company for each other. I never have been a squire to dames."

Marjorie looked her brother up and down, then shook her pretty head at him.

"I disapprove of recluses. I shall rout you out of

that study of yours and make you attend me riding. Does your wife never require your services?"

"No, never," said Una, cheerfully. "We agreed when we married that we would not interfere with each other, and I have always been accustomed to go about alone. I like it best."

"But that makes a man very selfish, and gives no scope for his chivalry. I think, my dear little sister-in-law, you and I must make war upon his study; but more of this anon."

She nodded laughingly to her brother, who was wisely retreating; then she followed Una into the drawing-room, and, sinking into an easy chair by the fire, for a time seemed lost in thought.

Una took a seat opposite her, and began caressing her greyhound Victor, who as usual lay outstretched at his mistress's feet.

At last Marjorie looked up with a smile.

"Now, pretty child, tell me of your neighbours. Who visits you? Are any of them amusing or entertaining?"

"They are all very interesting to me," said Una, regarding her guest perplexedly; "but I hardly think you would consider them either amusing or entertaining. We know no grand people; our neighbours are the fishers and their wives."

Marjorie opened her blue eyes in languid astonishment.

"But does no one of good birth or breeding live near

you? Surely England does not possess such vast tracts of desolate country that you can live without sound or sight of any human being save yourselves?"

"I know no one," Una replied simply.

"But I travelled in the coach to-day with a gentleman who interested me mightily. Such a pathetic story he told me! and his dark eyes were moist with feeling as he called himself a broken-hearted widower! He lives but fourteen miles from this place, for he knows it well. He said he had the fortune, or misfortune, to be picked up half drowned on the shore. He was wrecked in a Norwegian barque, and was the only one left alive."

Una's colour came and went.

"His name!" she said breathlessly. "Was it Duncan Thiselthwaite?"

Marjorie looked at her and laughed.

"Ah, now I know who was the pretty curly-haired nymph that came over the water! You see her kind deed has not been forgotten! Yes, the gentleman's name was the one you mention. I travelled in the coach as far as Kingstawton with a London acquaintance, a Mrs. St. Justice. She introduced him to me. There was delay over some broken traces, and we put up at a country inn for some hours. He beguiled those dull hours very pleasantly, though his heart was heavy, and his life at present so dark."

Marjorie paused, clasped her hands round one small knee, and gazed dreamily into the glowing embers before her.

Ah, well!" she continued, with a sigh, "woman's sympathy unlocks the most silent tongue. He told me of his speedy journey home after his recovery from a watery grave. He was hasting to a young wife after two months' absence, but the news of his death had reached her before he did himself. The shock was too much for one in her condition. He arrived home to find that he had a son and heir, but his gentle young wife was gone. One life given at the expense of the other, and the father left, almost wishing that the sea had been allowed to swallow him up in its depths."

Una's eyes were full of tears.

"How strange, how sad! He looked so young, I thought at first he was but a boy!"

"He is but a boy in years."

There was a silence for a few moments; then Marjorie stretched her feet out to the blaze with an ill-concealed yawn.

"I shall not wonder to see him riding over one day. His mother has gone to keep house for him; she has been to Court, I hear, and is not by any means a rustic dame!"

Conversation languished after this. Marjorie retired early to rest; and Una fell asleep to dream of Duncan Thiselthwaite launching the *Triumph* to rescue pretty Marjorie from the raging waves.

For the next few days Una found her time much engrossed by her visitor. Marjorie insisted upon seeing everything. She explored every room and every corner in the old house and out. She got Una to take

her out in her boat for a row, and to introduce her to some of the fishers; and it was with the greatest difficulty that Una kept her from visiting **the** Witches' Hole.

"I adore anything mysterious and supernatural! I should like to visit it by moonlight. Let us try to persuade Cuthbert to accompany us."

But Una shook her head, and changed the subject abruptly. She was very reticent about her visits to that haunted spot; not even her husband knew where she spent so many hours of the day, and she did not feel sure enough of Marjorie to entrust her with such an important secret. Nothing would induce her to row her in that direction; and Marjorie, having a strong will of her own, determined that sooner or later she would gratify her desire, and if she could not persuade her young hostess to take her, she would persuade some one else. She astonished and bewildered Una by her talk, and by her alternate fits of gaiety and depression.

"Oh, I shall die if I do not see some one soon!" she exclaimed before she had been at the Towers a week. "If no visitor appears before the next twenty-four hours are over, I shall throw myself over the cliff into the sea!"

"But why?" asked Una, perplexed by her extravagant language. "Why would a visitor please you?"

"Oh, you piece of innocence, I want some one before whom I can air all my pretty blandishments and

graces!—some one who would admire my frocks and my furbelows!”

“I admire you very much,” said Una warmly; “and Cuthbert thinks you wonderful! He told me so.”

Marjorie dropped her a little curtsey.

“Thank you kindly, but my soul demands a different sort of admiration. Cuthbert! He is an absent book-worm! He sees nothing but ink and paper; he lives in a world of black and white letters, and in his own and his manuscripts’ recollections of a dead buried past.”

But Marjorie’s depression was not of long duration, for she spied a solitary rider coming up the drive, and she was not wrong in her conjecture as to his identity.

It was Duncan Thiselthwaite.

Una was out when he arrived, but she came in before he left.

He seemed already on very intimate terms with Marjorie, and apologized for his mother not having called with him.

“Truth to teli,” he said to Una, with one of his courteous little bows, “we were not aware that the Towers was now the property of a bride and bridegroom. My mother used to visit the late Mr. Endicott’s mother when she lived here, but that is many years ago. She is most anxious to make your acquaintance, especially since she has heard of the kind part you played in the rescue of her son.”

“Who told you I took any part in it?” asked Una rather bluntly.

“The good folk that housed and fed me. I have not the honour to be the only one you have rescued from a watery grave, for one of them also owes his life to you.”

“Why, my dear child, this is most romantic! How many rescues have you accomplished?” exclaimed Marjorie.

“It is nothing,” Una said, with a little shrug of her shoulders. “I only called some one to Mr. Thiselthwaite’s aid. It was Jim that brought him back to life.”

Duncan smiled rather sadly.

“I wished,” he said, as he turned his dark eyes upon Marjorie, “that Jim had not been so energetic on my behalf. My arrival home—ah—I cannot speak of it!”

There was a silence. Marjorie looked her sympathy. Una felt uncomfortable; then, mindful of her duties as hostess, summoned the old butler to bring refreshment to the visitor.

Conversation seemed to flag until Duncan took his leave. Una could talk very happily to strangers as a rule; but there was an artificial atmosphere about Marjorie that quenched her bright humour.

The subtle flattery and flowered language of the woman of the world puzzled her simple mind.

As Duncan rode away she looked after him thoughtfully.

“He is a handsome man, Marjorie!”

“Yes, of his sort; but I have seen many with a finer presence.”

Marjorie spoke indifferently. She was arranging some violets in a knot of lace on her breast.

Una glanced at her dainty figure in her silk brocade, and then down at her much-worn serge.

“I wonder,” she said, half aloud, “if he thought I stole his things?”

“Goodness gracious child, what things you say! He told me that he found himself stripped, when he recovered consciousness. What was the mystery?”

Una shook her head, and laughed.

“I am not going to tell you. That is my secret,” she said, and she ran out of the room.

It was not long before Mrs. Thiselthwaite called upon Una and her visitor. Marjorie became very friendly with her, and was soon constantly riding over to Thiselthwaite Manor. Una avoided these visits whenever she could, and Marjorie, finding she did not mind being laughed at for her unsociability, brought Cuthbert to her aid.

“Why do you not want to accompany Marjorie on the visits she wishes to make?” he asked his young wife one afternoon, when Marjorie had driven off in Mrs. Thiselthwaite’s carriage and left her at home.

Una answered very simply.

“Because it is such waste of time sitting up to talk and pay each other compliments. I have other things to do.”

Cuthbert looked at her childish figure as she stood before him with a net across her arm, and her old woollen cap pushed to the back of her curly head; and he shook his head with a smile.

“You are getting too old to be so absorbed in your beach amusements. Marjorie thinks the mistress of the Towers should show more dignity and precision. Now what is your business this afternoon, may I ask?”

He spoke indulgently, as if to a child; and the colour rose at once to Una's cheeks.

“Every day this week I have been out with Marjorie. She takes up all my time. This afternoon I am going to have to myself. If she thinks me childish I do not care a bit. And you knew what I was when you married me, and we have got on very well indeed up to the present time. You promised not to interfere with me.

Cuthbert looked surprised at her indignant tone.

“My dear child, I am not going to interfere with you. Perhaps when this book, that is taking up so much of my time and thought is finished, I may have leisure to go about with you a little. I have been thinking what a nice companion Marjorie is for you. She will prevent you from feeling lonely and dull.”

“I don't know what dullness means!”

Una dashed out of the room, and running swiftly along the top of the cliffs, she made her way towards the entrance of the Witches' Hole.

“Cuthbert is so stupid!” was her impatient thought. “Here is something that needs my help, something that I ought to work at with no hindrance or interruption, for it is to save human beings! Yet he talks as if I am spending my time in making sand castles on the beach!”

CHAPTER IX.

A FISHER'S BRIDE

“A maiden, modest and yet self-possess’d,
Youthful, and beautiful, and simply dressed.”
Longfellow.

It was Kathie’s wedding-day. Her courtship had been brief. There was nothing to wait for, and Jim’s choice had been much approved of by the village. It had almost reinstated the Tanners in the favour of all. But their unpopularity was not due only to their keeping aloof from their neighbors. It was well known that neither of the three men took pleasure in wrecks and their salvage. They were never seen dividing the spoils that were washed ashore. They were under suspicion of trying to warn and prevent vessels gliding on to their doom. And it was this that caused them to be eyed with such disfavour.

Kathie was a general favourite. She had been born and bred in the village; and Jim’s choice of a house in the centre of the village street was the cause of much satisfaction.

“The lass will the makin’ of him,” was the opinion of the married women.

Una was up early. She had insisted upon giving Kathie her wedding-dress, which was a soft white

merino; and she was the first at Kathie's cottage, to help her array herself in her bridal garments.

Kathie met her with flushed cheeks and lustrous eyes.

"It feels such an awesome thing!" she whispered. "Oh, tell me how you felt, Missy, when you went through it?"

"Just nothing at all," responded Una cheerfully.

Kathie shook her pretty head doubtfully.

"But then your man wasn't Jim!"

"No, he wasn't. Now stand still, Kathie, and don't be excited. Brides never are. They're supposed to be as white and cold as their dress!"

From whence Una got her experience of brides she did not say. She was engrossed in fastening some flowering myrtle and winter jasmine to Kathie's dress, and even ventured to put some in her hair. Kathie was entirely oblivious of what was being done to her. Suddenly she turned round upon Una with fervour.

"Oh, Missy, it has come to me so often lately, and I never could say a word before me and Jim were courtin'! But if ever I can do a thing to show my gratefulness to you I will, if it cost me my life! You saved my Jim from drownin'! 'Tis you that have brought about this day, for if he'd a-perished, I'd never have mated with any other man, and I'd have gone lone and sorrowin' all my days. May you be blessed as you have blessed others!"

Una laughed lightly, then bent forward and kissed Kathie's hot cheeks.

“Don’t be a goose, Kathie! You deserve to be happy, and I know you will be. Now here is your cousin, Mrs. Polperran. I must leave you in her hands and run home. You will see me in church; and Miss Gregson is coming too. She loves weddings!”

A little later, and Perrancove Church was crowded with the whole population of the village. Una and Marjorie sat in the front seats, and the scene was intensely amusing to Marjorie. The wedding clothes of the guests brought delighted curves to her lips and eyes; but even she was impressed with the simple beauty of the bride and the quiet, manly bearing of the bridegroom.

As they passed down the churchyard, one little scene seemed to cast the only shadow across their path. A poor, half-crazed woman, who made it her business to wander about the country and attend any village festivity, sprang up on the low stone wall and addressed them.

Shaking her withered fist in Kathie’s face, she cried—

“Christened in white! Married in white! Buried in white! Time be goin’ to hurry thee on! An’ mated to a man that the sea be wantin’! Poor maid! Laugh to-day for the sea be sleepin’. But ’tis wakin’ shortly and callin’ for thy mate!”

Then, breaking into a shrill laugh, she sang—

“Waves be wakin’, waves be callin’,
Waves be watchin’ for thy mate.
Keep him, hold him, time be comin’
When he’ll have to meet his fate.”

Kathie trembled as she listened; but Jim strode on, and only pressed the hand that lay inside his arm the tighter.

“She be only a poor crazed creetur,” he whispered consolingly.

Kathie raised her dark eyes to his somewhat wistfully.

“Oh, Jim, if my love can hold thee, it will!”

“Ay, sweetheart!”

They had reached the new house, where a well-spread table was awaiting the wedding guests behind them.

For a moment or two they stood alone in the room; then Jim stooped and took Kathie’s burning cheeks between his two hands.

“Lassie,” he said brokenly, “God Almighty has joined us together. May He give us His blessin’ now.”

Kathie gave a little sob, and as her husband’s kisses fell quick and fast, she put her arms round his neck.

“Oh, Jim, I’ll be a good wife. God helpin’ me I will.”

The vows in church had not been made with a fuller heart. It was a moment of deep and sweet solemnity to them both.

“These rustic weddings are so charming,” said Marjorie to Una that same afternoon. I am not sure that they do not enjoy themselves much more than we do under similar circumstances.”

“You speak as if they are quite a different order of

beings," said Una. "Kathie is a dear friend of mine. I like her better than anybody I know."

"She is a handsome girl, I allow. Who was the old crone that tried to cast a spell over the happy couple as they went out to the church gate?"

"That is old Patty Jessop. She is a harmless creature."

"I shouldn't feel very comfortable under her prophecies," said Marjorie with a little shiver. "I thought she might be the occupant of the Witches' Hole. I am longing to investigate that mysterious spot."

"You will never get any one to row you there."

"Do not be too sure. A few golden pieces will be too great a temptation."

Una shook her head, but she looked a little troubled. She began to wish her sister-in-law would leave them, for she found it more and more difficult to escape her vigilance and visit the Witches' Hole in the day-time.

Marjorie seemed too well satisfied with her surroundings to take her departure. Her rides with Duncan Thiselthwaite became of almost daily occurrence. She would come in from them in radiant spirits.

"Where have I been?" she would say in reply to Una's inquiries. "How can I tell? Through the airy clouds of fancy and dreams. I can tell you what I have been doing—bringing solace and comfort to the heart of a disconsolate widower."

And then one day Una witnessed a little scene

through her turret window that made her see and understand.

Duncan was standing near an old oak in the garden, one arm through the bridle of his horse, the other round Marjorie. Her head was reposing on his shoulder; she put up one of her little hands and lightly caressed his cheek. He bent his head until his face touched hers, and Una turned away from the window, saying to herself—

“He has soon forgotten his young wife. It might be Kathie and Jim to look at them.”

Marjorie soon announced her engagement. Cuthbert was astonished, and at first not well pleased.

“The fellow has only just lost his wife, and now he is taking another already!”

“But we do not intend to make our engagement public at present,” argued Marjorie. “And Duncan’s first marriage was planned and arranged by his mother. He told me so. She was a sweet, gentle girl, but there was no affinity of soul between them.”

Cuthbert shook his head.

“I don’t understand such language. Many loves are lightly loved, I have always heard.”

Then Marjorie flashed round upon him.

“Duncan adores my little finger more than you do Una’s soul and body! Don’t talk to me of being lightly loved! How much do you love your wife? What is the depth of your affection for her? I never came across a more indifferent, cold-blooded husband than yourself! She is no more than a housekeeper,

and you do not deserve such a pretty, winsome morsel of humanity!"

She left the room and her brother lifted his head with a dazed, bewildered look.

He felt as if he had received a blow. He had been talking to his sister in his study, and he was in the midst of his writing. Yet now he sat gazing before him oblivious of his book. What did Marjorie mean? Why did she upbraid him? He supposed he had made a mistake in mentioning the word "love." It was not an experience he had passed through. At least, not since he had attained middle life. Yet his wife was entitled to respect. What right had Marjorie to call her his housekeeper? He was fond of her; of course he was. If anything took her away from him, he would not dream of proposing to another woman within six months of her death. It would be most unsuitable, outrageous!

Whilst he was pondering these things in his mind, Marjorie was holding an animated conversation with his wife.

"It was love at first sight with both of us, Una," she was saying as she leaned back in a comfortable chair, and regarded her young sister-in-law with laughing eyes.

"I am no country miss to be taken with the first handsome man I meet. I have met with too many of them for that, and I may say without conceit that I have refused more than one highly advantageous offer. Good looks, good birth, and wealth all included! But

from the first moment I saw Duncan's eyes and heard his voice I knew that I had met my fate."

"How very curious," said Una wonderingly. "I cannot understand why he should appear different to any other. And yet," she added with a rising blush, "I thought his voice and look very pleasant when I first saw him. He made me think, in that one moment, that he liked and understood me."

A little pucker came in Marjorie's white brow. Then she laughed.

"Sometimes I think you are a woman," she said, "sometimes a baby. I do not know why I am descending to you like this. Duncan and I were drawn together in true lover fashion. He could not get my image out of his thoughts; he is madly, mightily in love with me. He tells me, poor fellow, that he only lives when in my presence."

Una was silent. She found herself often now mentally comparing her experience with others, and she dimly began to wonder whether her courtship and marriage had not been an exception to the rule. She left Marjorie, and wandered about the house a little restlessly. It was a pouring, wet day. She had a cold, a rather unusual event for her, and Marjorie had persuaded her to stay indoors. But now she felt she must escape out of the house. Snatching up her old worsted cap and shawl, she was making her way to the front door, when her husband called her.

She put her head in at the study door a little impatiently.

“What is it? I am going out.”

“Not this weather, surely?”

“Now, Cuthbert, do I ever mind the weather?”

“But you are not well; Marjorie told me she heard you coughing all night!”

This sudden interest in her health surprised Una.

“A cough is nothing,” she said indifferently. Then a catch in her breath made her stop speaking, and the cough came on.

Cuthbert quietly drew her in, and shut the door.

“I am not going to let you go out to-day; sit down here and talk to me.”

Una's soul at once rose in hot rebellion.

“I am going out,” she repeated. “You promised when you married me that you would not interfere with me.”

“You promised when you married me that you would obey me.”

Una opened her eyes, and looked at him like an astonished child.

“Have you finished your book?” she asked.

“No.”

“Then I think you had better return to your work, and leave me to go on with mine.”

She spoke with quiet dignity, but Cuthbert would not be silenced. He seemed a different man. Without a word he gently went towards her and removed the shawl from her shoulders.

“I am going to exercise a husband's privilege,” he said, with a little smile, “and take care of my wife.

No, I cannot permit you to go out again to-day. I am considering your health. I have been too neglectful of you hitherto. Marjorie has opened my eyes."

"If Marjorie is the cause of this, I shall ask her to leave the house."

All Una's hot blood was roused. She spoke with flashing eyes and quivering lips; then, before her husband could stop her, she had dashed past him and out of the room. It was but the work of a moment to get another cloak, and then out into the blinding rain she ran, stumbling over the short thick grass on the edge of the cliff, and finally making a hasty and precipitous descent to the Witches' Hole.

Eli and Jim Tanner were busy hammering away at the precious craft, and they looked up with consternation at Una's appearance.

"I thought I should never get here," she said by way of explanation. "I was delayed, and I have run all the way."

"'Tis a bad day for ye to be out," said Eli.

"I never stay in for weather; are you going, Jim?"

"I promised the wife to be back soon," said Jim, a little bashfully. "Her doesn't know where I be, or what us be doin' here. I'm wonderin' if I might tell her. Her b'ain't a talker."

"Oh, Jim, you musn't! I have your promise that you keep our secret."

Jim rubbed the back of his head.

"'Tis ork'ard 'twixt man and wife. Her be brave an' sharp, Kathie be, an' her dussn't rightly like what her can't come at!"

“Nonsense! She must trust you. I have never told my husband about it. He never asks questions. Tell Kathie you are doing some business for me, if she wants to know where you have been.”

Jim went off down to the beach, pulled his boat to the water's edge, and rowed off, but there was a depressed air about him that even old Eli noticed.

He said to Una, with a little smile, “Jim be discoverin’ that his actions be not so free as they was back along.”

“Marriage hasn’t made any difference to me, so I do not see why it should to him,” was Una’s quick reply; and then the scene with her husband that afternoon made her stop in her work and ponder.

Presently she said, with a little laugh, to Eli, “It is a good thing to know your own mind, and to stick to it, isn’t it? If the way is a right way, one ought to take it, however much others may try to prevent you.”

“Ay, Missy, if it be the right way.”

“I ran away from my husband this afternoon,” Una said, looking at the old man with a merry twinkle in her eyes. “He wanted me to stay in, and I wanted to come out.”

Eli shook his head.

“I’m doubtin’ if your way was a right one.”

“Of course it was. Every stroke of work we do to this dear boat means that she will be launched the sooner.”

“Ay, Missy, your will be a strong one, but it needs to be broken,” said Eli, with a sorrowful look in his

honest eyes. “ ’Tis not the spirit of the Good Master, who was meek and lowly in spirit. Seemeth to me, a young wife must obey her husband. ’Tis in the marriage vows.”

“Oh, but my husband and I arranged we shouldn’t keep to those,” Una replied hastily. “We each go our own way, and do what we like. It is much the best way. I don’t know what made him speak to me so this afternoon. His sister, Miss Gregson, has been talking to him. It would be quite dreadful if Cuthbert began ordering me about.”

There was silence, then Eli said slowly—

“When I were a young lad, I went across the channel in a timber barque. The captin, he be an’ old sailor an’ a cock-sure ’un! We used to say, ‘No one need teach Dan Denton how to pilot his craft inside any harbour!’ Us got into a nasty squall outside the coast o’ Holland, an’ there were sandbanks. ’Twas a dark night when we ran on ’em, an’ the lights o’ the Dutch harbour were close in sight. By an’ by, off come a lifeboat to us, wi’ a Dutch crew, but captin, he shook his head. ‘No, lads, no; I’ll wait here till mornin’ an’ then I’ll get her off sure enough,’ says he. The Dutchman warned him, an’ begged of him to leave his barque an’ save his life. But the captin had a will o’ his own, an’ his way were the right way he said. The lifeboat were sent back, an’ two hours after the sands begun to suck us down. I pitched myself out, an’ by the Lord’s goodness were washed ashore, but I were the only one saved. Captin an’ crew an’

barque were nowheres in the mornin' light. Were that the lifeboat's fault, Missy?"

"No," said Una gravely. "What an obstinate man!"

"He knowed his own mind, an' he stuck to 'un!"

Eli's look was a knowing one. Una laughed aloud.

"Ah, you think you have turned the tables on me; I knew the moral before you finished your tale!"

"Seemeth to me," old Eli continued after a pause, "this 'ere lifeboat us be so at pains to make will be a thing o' nought, unless men be willin, to leave their sinkin' craft an' trust 'emselves to it!"

"Of course it will."

"An' the dear Lord who be the World's Lifeboat, be not able to save a single one of us that sticks to our own ways an' plans, an' won't just giv' 'em all over, and let Him plan an' carry us into harbour safe."

Una looked serious.

"You always make me unhappy, Eli. You make the way to be good so difficult."

"Nay, Missy, 'tis so easy like—'tis the simpleness an' sureness of it that makes us all so glad."

"But you make out that we have to do nothing, and I am quite sure that is wrong."

"Us has to take a big step. Our Lifeboat have been made at the cost o' the dear Lord's precious life, but 'tis us that has to step inside an' trust ourselves entirely to 'un."

"And is that all?"

“Why, that be but step number one! We bends our backs to the Master’s will; He be the Pilot an’ the Captin, an’ us sits us down an’ begins to pull just here an’ there, where He be guidin’ an’ tellin’ of us. Us have to pull all our lives, an’ pull against the tide, an’ wind, an’ storm, but us does it, an’ pulls to save others, an’ all the time our Captin be comfortin’ an’ leadin’ us safe through the currents, away from the rocks, until He lands us safe in port.”

Una did not reply. These conversations were sinking deep into her heart and mind; and Eli saw it, and prayed for her the more.

CHAPTER X.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

“He is a fool, who thinks by force or skill
To turn the current of a woman’s will.”

Tuke.

Una was wet through before she reached home, and her cold was none the better for it. Cuthbert did not see her till dinner-time. He seemed to have forgotten her wilfulness, and talked to his sister with more interest and warmth than usual. Later in the evening when they were standing round the drawing-room fire, preparatory to retiring to their rooms for the night, Una’s cough became troublesome again.

Marjorie looked at her and shook her head.

“You will find your body will assert itself one of these days,” she said. “You are treating it badly.”

“You did not go out this afternoon?” Cuthbert asked.

Una nodded.

“Against my wish. Where did you go?”

Una flashed a proud little glance at him.

“Give her a scolding,” laughed Marjorie, “I will leave you, for I am longing for bed. These dark, rainy days are very wearying.”

She disappeared; and Cuthbert’s eyes rested on his young wife in a meditative fashion.

“Where did you go?” he repeated gravely.

“To my usual haunts,” Una replied lightly; “they do not interest you.”

“I cannot have you set my wishes aside in this fashion. You are such a child that you seem to think life is merely a game—a husband a nonentity.”

Una was startled by the stern ring in Cuthbert’s tone.

But she was not submissive. She flung her head back impatiently.

“Why are you making this disturbance? You are generally too engrossed in your books to care what I do or where I go. I cannot understand your sudden interest in me.”

Then a hidden fire leaped into Cuthbert’s eyes; he turned and put his hand on her shoulder, and Una’s head drooped beneath the intensity of his gaze.

“Child, I would not have our marriage a failure. I am responsible for your welfare. I promised your guardian I would protect and care for you. I own I have been absorbed in my work, but it will not last for ever; and when it is done, and I wish to have more of my wife’s society, I shall not expect her interests and pursuits to be entirely apart from mine. We are man and wife, Una; remember it; and when I wish for your confidence, do not withhold it.”

The mastery of the man was making itself felt. For the first time Una began to realise that **her** husband was not a nonentity.

She bit her lips to prevent the tears starting to her

eyes. She had never experienced a harsh word or harsh dealing in her life.

Miss Endicott's rule had been a lax and a loving one.

And Cuthbert, looking down at her face, realized afresh her childishness and inexperience.

Some instinct—he knew not what—prompted him to stoop and give her a kiss.

“We will not quarrel,” he said, trying to speak lightly; “but when I ask you to do, or not to do, a thing, think twice before you ignore my wishes.”

Una bravely battled with her feelings. His kiss had touched and softened her.

She clasped her hands round his arm and, looking up at him with laughter and tears in close proximity, said winsomely—

“Have you any liking in your heart for me?”

Cuthbert was speechless. Una continued—

“I have been thinking lately that we are a strange couple. Marjorie seems to think so, and I know Kathie does. Perhaps, after all, the Prayer-book was right and we are wrong.”

“In what way?”

“In not loving one another.”

She released his arm, and slipped out of the room.

Another married couple had been having words together that same evening.

Kathie welcomed Jim back to tea with a blushing smile. Her cottage kitchen was a picture of neatness

and order. She herself, clad in a scarlet flannel bodice, dark serge skirt, and snow-white apron, with just a knot of scarlet ribbon in her hair, looked the picture of health and beauty.

“Oh, Jim, I’ve bin wearyin’ for the sight of ye!”

Jim squared his shoulders, then sat down in his chair by the hearth.

“I’m in for the night, sweetheart. What have ye bin at?”

“I took out my boat but brought it back. The lads were askin’ where my man was. Us must row in the same boat now, Jim; ’tis no good for me to play at bein’ a single woman agen.”

“Aye,” said Jim silently.

“Martha Craik were in a while ago. Her said her seed you rowin’ past Condry’s Cave. Why couldn’t ye have had me wi’ ye, Jim?”

Jim did not answer.

Then impulsive Kathie came and threw herself on her knees by his side. Laying her dark curly head against his shoulder, she turned her glorious eyes up to his.

“Jim, lad, tell me where ye have bin?”

Jim put his arm round her with a tight nervous clasp. He bent his head till his lips were touching her hair, but not a word did he say.

Kathie waited. She was determined to know her husband’s secret.

At last Jim gave a heavy sigh.

“Sweetheart, my life isn’t much without thee, but I have business that must be done away. ’Tis for Missy at the Towers.”

“Then tell me what it be.”

“Nay, that I cannot.”

“A husband’s secrets must be his wife’s.”

Jim could only shake his head.

“Jim, do ye love me?”

Jim pressed her closer to him with a convulsive grip.

Then Kathie sprang up and planted herself on his knees; she took his face between her two hands and showered kisses upon it; she wound her arms round his neck and whispered coaxingly in his ear—

“Oh, Jim, we’re part of each other; your secret must be mine, and I’ll ne’er let on to a soul. Trust me, lad, and tell me.”

Poor Jim groaned in anguish of spirit.

“I’ve passed my word, Kathie. Ye wouldn’t have me break it! But if ye go to Missy an’ tell her ye must know it, her will tell ’ee!”

Kathie sprang up and away from him with a scornful laugh—

“Am I the one to go whinin’ an’ cryin’ to an outsider to tell me what my husband be doin’, when he will not open his mouth? If ye be workin’ in secret, an’ treats your wife like a stranger, ye had best have remained unmated!”

With which passionate words Kathie left him for the rest of the evening alone, and fled up to her bed-

room, where finally she sobbed herself to sleep, feeling marriage was a failure and her husband a bitter and heartbreaking disappointment.

But the building of the *Triumph* went rapidly on. It was a comparatively small boat; for, as Una represented to Eli, the crew would be so few in number.

“Myself and you three men. We dare not trust any one else.”

It was one fine sunny afternoon that, as Una and the Tanners were hard at work, they were suddenly surprised by the splashing of oars outside. It was high tide, but it was seldom any boats passed so close to the ill-fated spot. Una ran down to the entrance and cautiously put her head outside. To her consternation she saw Marjorie and Duncan Thiselthwaite. They were in the act of landing their boat within a few feet of the cavern.

“We shall be discovered,” she said breathlessly, as she returned to her companions. “What shall we do?”

“Stop workin’,” Eli said quickly; “now back all into this dark corner. If so be that they have no lantern, they’ll find nothin’, an’ Tom can skeer ’em away. Jim, run up the ladder and shut out the light with the tarpaulin.”

This was done, and almost immediately voices were heard.

“Oh, Duncan, is it not a gruesome place! Now, what do you think we shall find here? three old

witches dancing round a cauldron of bones, or a sexton hammering coffins and digging graves? We were told on our way, you know, that we should hear our coffins being made. And really I began to think when we were passing Condyl's Cave that the strong current there would draw us on to the rocks. How superstitious every one is! Even my little sister-in-law seems afraid of coming here."

"I do not think there is much to see, dearest. Do you want to go right in?"

"Of course I do. But I did not think it would be so dark. Where are you? Let me hold your arm and strike a light. How stupid of us! We have brought no candles."

Duncan took matches out of his pocket, but the damp atmosphere prevented them from burning. There was deathly stillness. Cautiously they advanced, and then Tom, with his mouth close to the ground, gave vent to a most blood-curdling wail: it rolled round the cavern and echoed back from its walls with such ghostly effect that Marjorie's nerves were shaken, and with a scream she beat a hasty retreat.

When outside, she sank to the ground, white and trembling. Duncan tried to soothe her.

"It is only owls. There are always echoes in those great caverns. Don't be frightened, dearest."

"Oh, let us come away," gasped Marjorie. "It is a horrible place. I wish we had not come."

A very short time after, their boat was retreating

over the waves; and Una left her hiding-place with mingled feelings of relief and amusement.

“I would not let them discover us for worlds,” she said. “Now we have so nearly finished our work we must be doubly careful.”

“Missy,” said Jim shortly after, as Una was just taking her departure, “would you miss my service now that the boat be so far on?”

“I should think we would, Jim. Surely you are not tired of it?”

“No, I be not that,” was the grave reply, “but the wife wants me, an’ I cannot hold out no longer.”

“Kathie must not be selfish,” said Una in her most royal tone. “She must spare you to us as long as we want you. I think, Jim, it is best for husband and wife not to be too much together, then there is no interference with each other or quarreling.”

Jim could only stare uncomprehendingly at her. After a pause he said—

“’Tis comin’ betwixt us, Missy; and I’ve promised the wife that if I can’t let on to her where I be, that I’ll be away no more.”

Una was unused to opposition. She stamped her foot angrily.

“Kathie wants a good talking to! She is not going to spoil our plans with her selfishness. You ought not to give in to her, Jim; the husband ought to be master.”

As she said these words it flashed across her that circumstances alter cases. She had a keen sense of

justice and some little humour; and as she remembered that her own husband dared not thwart her in any of her plans, her impatience vanished, and she laughed aloud.

Jim's face was clouded.

"I'm learnin' that I don't understand women," he said humbly. "But I give ye my word that Kathie would hold her tongue if ye let me tell her all."

Una looked at him meditatively.

"I suppose she must be told if it is a question of losing you, Jim. But bind her to secrecy, and I will come and see her to-morrow morning, and show her what a failure all our work will be if any one gets to know of it."

Jim strode off home that afternoon with a sense of freedom and relief in his soul that he had not known for some time past. And Una went home pondering many things, unmanageable wives amongst them.

Marjorie was full of talk about the Witches' Hole that evening.

"I told you I would go," she said in triumph to Una, "and I accomplished it. But what an uncanny spot it is. I am more than half-inclined to believe the stories I hear about it. Can you not give me the full and true history of it?"

Una shook her head.

"I don't know the origin of all the stories. They say there is a bottomless hole in it. Do you remember old Patty who warned Kathie on her wedding day? The story goes that soon after she

was left a widow, many years ago, she was out catching lobsters in her boat; and on her return home she missed her way, owing to a sea fog, and rowed into the Witches' Hole. She did not come home till morning, when she was half-delirious from fright and exposure. She had some kind of fever, and when she recovered, her reason was gone. The fishers say she was 'bewitched.' "

"It is an age of superstition," remarked Cuthbert gravely. "The lower class are so ignorant and so uneducated that they believe anything."

"Well, there is something or somebody in the cavern," persisted Marjorie, "for I heard them."

"Owls or seagulls," her brother said shortly.

"No, I am sure it was not. But do not let us talk of it. I never want to go there again. I am sure I shall dream of it all night."

Una was intensely relieved to feel that Marjorie was never likely to trouble the Witches' Hole again; but she was uneasy about Kathie, and hurried down to her cottage the first thing the next morning.

She found her in, singing about her work and looking so bright and bonny that Una felt she could not scold her.

"Come in, Missy, and welcome," said Kathie, a little shyly. "Jim told me last night I might have a visit from you."

"Yes," said Una, with a grandmotherly air; "I am afraid you have been giving your husband a good deal of trouble."

The colour dyed Kathie's cheeks a deep crimson. Then she looked up and said simply—

“It were hard on me, Missy. ’Twas a tug when I parted wi’ my own boat, and giv’ up goin’ out wi’ the smacks like I always did. But I says to Jim, ‘The wife must be wi’ her husband, an’ not have a life to herself no more!’ So I hasted through my work of a mornin’ to be ready to go wi’ Jim later, an’ then he tells me curt-like I was not wanted, an’ he liked best to go alone. An’ that was not enough; he stayed out hours an’ hours when other boats were in and the lasses had their men home, an’ I were kep’ in the dark.”

“You should have trusted him, Kathie. You know how steady he is; you knew he could not be doing any harm.”

“It has cost me the two miserablest months in my life,” said Kathie, with a quick-caught sob in her breath. “I’ve said words to Jim that have cut him to the heart; an’ words cannot be unsaid. I’ve been mad wi’ anger an’ sulks; an’ Jim, he—well, he have bin an’ angel!”

She paused, then went on hurriedly—

“Missy, my Jim’s religion be worth havin’, for he lives it out. I tempted him like the devil, but never a sour look or cross word did I get; an’ I told him on my knees this mornin’ that I wasn’t fit to be his wife. I prayed him to make me like himself, an’ he be goin’ to learn me of an evenin’. He says ’tis

God's Book will learn me, an' I be goin' to be a right good woman from this day forth."

"You have never been a wicked one, Kathie," said Una, interested in the girl's earnestness.

"I've bin livin' like a haythen, Missy! I've never had one thought of God all the day, an' never thanked Him for His love."

Una was silent for a minute, then she said—

"I don't think I have either."

"My Jim has been taught proper by his grandfeyther, but he told me for years he used to think it foolish to be so on at religion like his grandfeyther. But then he said the time come, when he see he were a rebel a-fightin' against his rightful King. He were turnin' the Captain out o' one o' His own boats, instead of servin' under Him. An' now he says, quite solemn like, he have signed for life service under a Captain who will be a Pilot too, an' will bring peace in any storm. Jim says 'tis what our Lord died for, to bring us to Himself an' to God Almighty; but I don't rightly understand, Missy; only I be goin' to learn."

Una sat silent for some minutes. Her own secret was forgotten under the pressure of these more serious thoughts.

Then Kathie began, with kindling eyes, to speak of the lifeboat.

"Wild horses won't tear it from me, Missy. I'll give Jim up willin'ly to work at so great a job. Oh! it will be grand to save the poor wrecked sailors!

I don't rightly see how it will be done; but when the boat be ready, things will fit in, I reckon!"

"But, Kathie, do you understand the importance of keeping the secret? If Martin, Enoch, and others once heard about it, they would come and smash the boat to pieces!"

"Ay," said Kathie, gravely; "an' the lads would be knocked to pieces, too. There would be murder, sure enough, if wreckin' an' robbin' were to be put a stop to! Missy, my Jim's life be in it, and mine too. Rest easy about my tongue!"

CHAPTER XI.

INCAPACITATED

“How poor are they that have not patience?
What wound did ever heal, but by degrees?”
Shakespeare.

The *Triumph* was finished. One fine afternoon the ceremony of her christening took place, and Una was beside herself with excitement and delight. Old Eli took the matter seriously. Standing on the beach, by the side of the lifeboat, with the sunshine resting on his white hair, he looked like some old patriarch when he raised his hands and said—

“Let us beseech the Almighty’s blessing on her.”

Tom and Jim uncovered their heads, Una and Kathie dropped upon their knees, and, raising his eyes with humble reverence to the blue sky above, the old man prayed—

“O gracious God, we commend our work to Thy care. Thou knowest why we have toiled so hard. Use her to save Thy creatures, and let us have the Master Himself with us when we venture out on the ragin’ billows. Let the souls that we hope to save from a watery death be gathered into the Eternal Lifeboat. Let us, the crew of this small boat, be also the crew of that world-wide one, and do Thou bring

us through the storm of life wi' them that we've rescued, safe into Heaven's port at last."

When Una rose from her knees, her face was wet with tears. Impulsively she laid her hand on the old man's arm.

"Oh, I will be one of that crew, God helping me, I will!"

She awaited with feverish impatience the result of a trial trip, which was taken in the darkness of a squally night, and in which, to her bitter disappointment, she was unable to participate. But she heard that the small crew were well satisfied with the *Triumph's* capability for riding over the waves. Her lightness and buoyancy were beyond dispute; and Una began to long for the time to come to test her powers.

Marjorie was still wholly engrossed with her lover. After that one brief awakening, when Cuthbert tried to assert his authority over his bride and failed, he had sunk again into his usual absorption of mind and remained in his study amongst his books. But his work, like Una's, was drawing to an end; and the day came when he packed off his precious manuscript to the publishers, and eagerly awaited the first proof sheets.

In the waiting time he turned his attention again upon his wife.

"Una, what are you going to do this afternoon?" he asked one morning after breakfast.

"You must not ask her," said Marjorie, laughing.

“She has her plans, and carries them out independently of any one else.”

“I want you to ride out with me,” Cuthbert said, looking straight at his young wife as he spoke.

Una elevated her eyebrows.

“I hardly ever ride,” she said; “and I have not seen you on horseback for months. Why do you want me to accompany you?”

“I need not give a reason for all my wishes,” was the grave reply. “What hour will suit you? Will two o’clock?”

“I suppose so,” Una replied unwillingly; then meeting Marjorie’s mirthful eyes, she said—

“I daresay Marjorie would gladly take my place.”

“No she would not,” that little lady replied; “I am going for a ride with Duncan. The adoring lovers, and the devoted husband and wife, may pass each other on the road; but their ways will not lie together. I can safely assure you that!”

When two o’clock came, Una stood on the stone steps in her long green habit, with a perplexed air.

She had by this time become so accustomed to be away from her husband, that she felt strange in his presence.

He lifted her into her saddle, and away they went; across the short spongy turf on the top of the cliffs, meeting the keen salt breeze of the sea, and then down into leafless lanes, with stunted hedgerows.

Una was a good horsewoman, and the rarity of her rides enhanced the pleasure of the present one.

“I do not know why I do not ride oftener,” she said, turning her glowing, happy face towards her husband. “But I have been so busy that I have had little time for it.”

He laughed.

“Always your important business! And such mysterious business that no one is told about it! Why don’t you initiate Marjorie into the delights of your lobster pots, and net fishing?”

“Marjorie wants no one but Duncan now,” said Una, lightly. “She is never happy unless she is with him. How tired they will get of each other?”

Cuthbert looked at her sharply.

“Have you got tired of me yet?” he asked, half laughingly.

“No,” was the sedate reply; but if I saw as much of you as Marjorie does of Duncan, I should, I know.”

“That is not very flattering to me,” said Cuthbert, half amused, half vexed at the extreme frankness of his wife. “I mean that you shall see much more of me soon. When my book is out, I shall be an idle man.”

“I hope it won’t be out just yet,” said Una with a smile. “Marjorie vexes me by the fuss she makes over Duncan. Everybody does not think him so wonderful; why should she?”

“It is a mystery,” was her husband’s short reply.

They had reached the end of the lanes and were coming out on the cliffs again, when Una's horse, that was rather fresh, suddenly took fright at something, and bolted. She sat firmly on her saddle and gripped her reins as tightly as she dared, but Cuthbert, in hot pursuit of her, saw, to his terror, that the frightened horse was making straight for the edge of the cliff. He held his breath, then called out—

“Take your foot from the stirrup and jump.”

And as in agony he watched her slight young figure nearing certain destruction, he knew that her life was very precious to him.

Una gathered her long habit together, and obeyed him. She flung herself on the ground only just in time. Her horse, when at the very edge, with a violent start stopped short; but the cliff was crumbling under his feet; a crash of fallen earth and stones, a dying shriek, and the poor creature was hurled hundreds of feet below, to be found some hours later, a shapeless mass on the jagged rocks.

With that shriek in her ears, Una lost consciousness. When she recovered her senses, she was in her husband's arms, and she lay with her head on his shoulder, wondering in a dazed fashion if she was in bed, and what was the matter with her.

In a moment or two she remembered; and raised her head with an effort.

“Am I broken to pieces?” she asked her husband, with an unsteady smile.

Cuthbert's face was as white as her own; he could not smile in return.

"I don't think you have any broken bones," he said. "Can you rise with my help?"

Una struggled to her feet.

"I am sure I must be a mass of bruises," she said; "and my right arm feels quite stiff. Oh! don't touch it! It must be broken! Just above the wrist!" She almost screamed with pain as her husband took out his handkerchief and made an impromptu sling for it. Then very tenderly he lifted her upon his horse, swung himself up behind her, and supporting her in his arms every step of the way, they rode slowly home. Arrived there, Una collapsed; and the doctor was sent for in haste. He found her severely bruised and shaken, and her right arm fractured, and he ordered her to bed forthwith.

Una had never been ill in her life. For the first day or two her head was aching so badly that she was content to lie still. Then she grew restive.

"I shall get up and go out. I must!" she asserted one morning, when her husband came to see how she was.

"No," he said gravely; "you cannot do that yet."

"Oh why did we go for that ride!" she moaned. "It is my right arm. It may never heal, and I shall never be able to row! I wish I had broken both legs rather than my arm!"

"Be thankful you escaped death," Cuthbert said

as he took a seat by her side. "You were very near it."

"I think I would as soon be dead, as maimed for life," Una cried. "Oh, Cuthbert, is this doctor a clever one? If you only knew how much depended on my arm! I must get back the use of it as quick as possible. If a real storm comes, what shall I do?"

Cuthbert thought her mind was wandering.

"My dear Una, Doctor Clifford is a clever surgeon. He has set your arm and says it is going on quite satisfactorily. You may not be able to have the free use of it for another month or so yet; but have patience! I am very thankful your hurts are no worse.

"It doesn't make any difference to you," said Una ungraciously. "You don't know what my arms are to me!"

Then she began to laugh at her words; and her ill-humour vanished. Stretching out her left hand she put it into her husband's.

"You have been very good to me, Cuthbert. Almost a Duncan!"

Mirth was in her eyes. Cuthbert surprised her by raising her hand to his lips.

"I am thankful my little wife has been preserved from sudden death," he said earnestly. "I could not have spared her."

Una lay looking at him with puzzled eyes. What

had come over her absent-minded husband, she wondered?

Then she gave a little shiver.

“Sudden death!” she repeated. “Where should I be now if you had not told me to jump? My one idea was to stick on poor Polly! I can’t bear to think of her end, and yet, as you say, it might have been mine; and my poor mangled body might be lying in a coffin in this very room, or I suppose I should have been buried by this time!”

She shuddered again.

“We will not think of it,” her husband said gravely.

There was a silence; then Una said somewhat sadly—

“If I had died, it would have been like a drowning person within reach of the lifeboat, only they had put off getting into it till too late!”

“What do you mean?”

“And,” went on Una dreamily, “it would not have been the lifeboat’s fault if I had met my fate; it would have been mine—Eli said so.”

Cuthbert looked puzzled, and asked for an explanation.

Una gave it to him, straightly and simply as was her fashion.

“It is the way to be truly religious; the way to God, and the way to heaven. Do you remember a text we heard the first Sunday we went to church together? ‘I am the Way.’ I couldn’t understand, and I have often thought of it since. Old Eli says,

Jesus Christ is the way to God. We must give ourselves up to Him and put our trust in Him exactly like wrecked sailors would trust themselves to a lifeboat. It sounds simple, doesn't it?"

"Very simple," responded Cuthbert gravely. He had not entirely stifled his desires after better things, and often mused upon his friend's last words, and his own promise to him.

"But," said Una with a little smile, and a shake of her head, "the fact is, I'm rather like the captain Eli told me about. I'm trusting in my own seamanship to see me through. I feel I want to have my way, and my will, and so I'm letting the lifeboat pass me by. I wonder if my accident is a warning to me? But I don't feel I can give up managing for myself yet."

Cuthbert looked at his young wife in silence. He took a few steps up and down the room.

Mr. Endicott's words were sounding in his ear—

"I have found the 'Way, the Truth, and the Life.' Set your heart to find Him too, and lead your wife."

Then he stood in front of her.

"Una, it is a warning; find the way that Eli has spoken to you about, and then teach me; for I—I cannot lead you to it myself."

He turned and left the room. Una remained deep in thought. Inaction was always distasteful to her. Usually, when her thoughts became troublesome, she would go out of doors and shake them off by outside interests, but now she could not. She took up a

book by her side, but she could not fix her attention upon it. She finally threw it down in disgust, and let her thoughts have full play.

When Marjorie came into her room an hour later, she was greeted with the words: "I have come to the conclusion that self-will is my curse."

Marjorie laughed gaily.

"It becomes you. As long it does not clash with my will, I am content to have it so. Only do not let your broken arm lead to morbid fits of self-examination and depression. Has Cuthbert been scolding you and asserting his authority? I fancy he is waking up at last. Oh, you are a ridiculous couple! You might have been married for fifty years to look at you!"

Una frowned a little.

"You are always trying to make me discontented, Marjorie. Cuthbert and I understand each other perfectly; and we are very happy."

"May I be prevented from experiencing such happiness!" said Marjorie, with a little shrug of her shoulders.

Then changing the subject she said, "I have been out for a walk, and have been talking to your friend Kathie. What a handsome young woman she is! As full of fire as you are of ice; and a strange mixture of innocence and shrewdness. She had just been seeing her husband off on a fishing expedition, and was nearly in tears at not accompanying him. It is going to be "dirty weather"—isn't that the

correct expression?—and Kathie is too precious in her husband's eyes to run any risks. Do you hear the wind rising, Una? Oh, I do hope we are not in for a storm; I cannot bear them so close at hand. We seem to live in the very centre of them.”

Una listened to the portentous sounds and signs of a gale with a sinking heart. By the time night came on, waves and wind were lashing the coast in fury. Before she retired to bed she was so excited and restless that she sent a message to Kathie to come and see her, and Kathie appeared with wonderful promptitude, though drenched and beaten with rain and spray.

Una received her by her bedroom fire.

Cuthbert was in his study; Marjorie had gone to bed; so the two girls would be undisturbed.

“Kathie, if a vessel should drift this way to-night!”

Una's cheeks were crimson with excitement as she spoke.

“The *Triumph* is ready, Missy, and Jim hath come back. He is dog tired, but he'll be out in less than no time if he be wanted.”

“Yes,” groaned Una, “but what about me? How can I take an oar? and I must be there, Kathie, I *must*!”

“I'll take your place,” said Kathie firmly. “'Tis best for you not to risk makin' your arm worse, Missy! Maybe we shall not be wanted. 'Tis not every storm that brings wrecks.”

“Oh, but I am hoping it will. Yes, I really am; so that we shall be able to save them, and feel that all our labour has not been in vain. And I shall be there, Kathie. I’m determined that I shall.”

“I had best run up again and tell you if anythin” happens,” said Kathie meditatively.

“No, no; every moment is of consequence. I can see your house from my window; and of course I may see danger signals from any passing vessel, but in case I don’t, and the *Triumph* is wanted, wave a lantern twice out of your window, and I shall know.”

Kathie promised and slipped away as quietly as she came. Una paced up and down her room for the next hour in great suspense. The storm increased in violence, the wind tore away huge branches of the oaks in the drive, and dashed them to the ground with triumphant glee. But the noise of the breakers made itself heard above the wind. The sea was lashed into billows of foam, the very rain was swept away by the showers of spray that hurled themselves inland to the great discomfiture of the fishers who, in their oilskins, were keeping as sharp a lookout as wind, and waves, and black darkness permitted them.

Then, as for the twentieth time Una was peering through her casement window, she saw the signal she was expecting, and in the distance she heard the dull booming of a gun.

Quivering with excitement, and not daring to call any one to her assistance, she with difficulty arrayed

herself in her oilskins and sou'wester. More than once she set her teeth, as a sharp pain through her arm reminded her of her hurt; but she muttered with a fixed resolve in her determined little face:

“I shall take my place at the helm, if nowhere else.”

CHAPTER XII.

CUTHBERT'S AWAKENING

“Thou comest between me and those books too often!
I see thy face in everything I see!”

Longfellow.

Very softly she made her way to her sanctum. She had to cross the lower hall, and it was with the greatest caution that she stepped past the library door. From the light still burning there she knew her husband was in it, but as she reached the door of her room a hand was laid on her shoulder. She turned in consternation and faced her husband.

“What is the meaning of this?” he inquired; and his voice had a stern ring in it as his keen eyes took in every detail of her dress.

For an instant Una faltered; then she threw back her head defiantly.

“I am going out. Let me pass. Why did you follow me?”

“I heard footsteps, so naturally came out. I have been watching the storm. It is an awful night, and I fancied I heard a signal of distress. My dear child, do you think for an instant that I am going to let you venture out on such a night as this?”

“I always slip out on stormy nights,” Una said with vehemence. “I have done so ever since I can remember. Every one in the village is up and out. Please don’t stop me—I must go.”

But Cuthbert stood before her, barring the narrow doorway with his tall, strong figure.

“It is madness to think of such a thing! You have never been out on such a night before, with my knowledge. I will not allow my wife to forget her position, and her duty to me, in such an outrageous freak.”

His eyes met hers in a glance that had mastery and determination in it.

Una felt angry and helpless.

“You have no business to interfere with me,” she said. “You promised you would not.”

“I never promised to stand aside and see my little wife go out in the middle of the night alone and unprotected, and she with a broken arm. Why, child, the wind would dash you to the ground before you got to the bottom of the steps. Come back with me.”

He drew her arm into his with a firm though gentle pressure, and Una felt that resistance was useless.

Tears of mortification and bitter disappointment rose to her eyes.

She suffered herself to be led back to her bedroom. Then she turned upon her husband passionately—

“You are making me hate you! You may call it a freak! If lives suffer and are lost through your tyranny I shall never forgive you!”

Cuthbert looked down upon her with an indulgent smile.

“You are very angry naturally,” he said; “but Una, I am beginning to think that I have left you too much to yourself, and you have had your own way too long.”

He left her, and went into his room.

Una lay awake all that night in wide-eyed misery. More than once she stole to her window in the vain hope of seeing or hearing something. She heard no more guns booming, and the beach was hidden from her view. But when the morning came, a strange story was going the round of Perrancove; it was brought up to the Towers by an old fish-woman, Sal Trepann, who hawked fish about the country-side.

A small sailing vessel had been driven to the coast, and was almost on the rocks when she sent up a signal of distress. There was to all appearance no hope of saving her; the usual watchers were greedily awaiting her destruction. Suddenly a small black boat was seen approaching her. The raging storm seemed to have little effect on it. Old Martin declared that in one gleam of moonlight before the black clouds swallowed it up he saw in the stern the Evil One himself. Another glimpse was got of the crew lowering themselves into it, and three men on the top of the cliff swore they saw the boat with her load dashing into the Witches' Hole. Horror and consternation was among the fishers, and great was the talk about it. When morning dawned, the yacht had entirely disappeared.

There was no trace of wreckage, nor was anything washed ashore

The population of Perran Cove felt they had been defrauded of their rights; yet one and all put it down to a supernatural power.

At the breakfast table Cuthbert discussed it with his wife and sister.

“It is continually surprising me afresh,” said Cuthbert, “that this village is so given over to superstition and ignorance.”

“Well,” said Marjorie, with a little shiver, “you shouldn’t have such places as the Witches’ Hole. There is something uncanny about it. How dreadful for the poor shipwrecked sailors if they got sucked into that awful place.”

“The story is that they were taken there in a boat,” said Cuthbert. “But of course the whole thing is in the imagination of the narrators. It is easy to fancy things on a pitch black night, with intervals of moonshine. They had better have been in their beds. It is an absurd custom to spend such nights in parading up and down the shore. Only harm and no good can come from it.”

“That is a hit at me, of course,” said Una, looking across the table at her husband imperturbably. “We had some words last night, Marjorie, and he interfered with me. I told him I hated him, and—and in the morning light he still seems objectionable!”

Cuthbert smiled.

“You are *such* a child!” he said.

"One day you will find the child astonishing you," retorted Una quickly.

After breakfast, she got through her housekeeping duties with amazing celerity, and then slipped out of the house to Kathie's cottage. She found that Jim had just gone out; but Kathie welcomed her eagerly, though with a certain amount of caution.

"We must be very careful, Missy," she said, closing her door, and speaking almost under her breath. "Jim says 'tis ticklish work keepin' it quiet, for us were seen by many, an' 'tis the wonder of the village!"

"Oh do tell me all about it from the beginning. I saw your light but couldn't come."

"Eli said he knowed you could not. 'Twas a fearful night. I don't know that ever I was out in such a storm. But the *Triumph* behaved beautiful, her just rose over it all, an' even when us were loaded Jim only had to bale out when us were a hundred yards from landin'. 'Twas a foreign gent's private boat—a yacht, they call it—and us saved crew and all in two journeys. The yacht was towed into the Witches' Hole at four this mornin', an' her were not much the worse, for they left her anchored. The master and crew boarded her and went off at five, an' us fancies that no one saw her go, for the outlet from the Witches' Hole cannot be seen from Perrancove."

"I can't imagine how we shall keep it secret," said Una, flushing with excitement. "Oh, it is splendid, Kathie! If you hadn't gone, I suppose they would have drifted as usual on to the rocks, and not one of

them been alive this morning. Wasn't Jim delighted?"

"He be fair worn out, Missy, this mornin', but he dare not stay indoors, for they be all off fishin', an' his feyther be gone too. But 'twas terrible last night! It made me think o' God an' heaven, Missy! For us knew us might be goin' to our death. Grandfeyther were grand! He prayed all the way, and us said 'Amen' over and over, for 'twas terrible hard rowin'. It made me glad I've given myself into the Lord's strong Hands, for I wasn't feared, but grandfeyther said he were glad you wasn't there. 'Twould be too risky!"

"It is no more risky for me than you," said Una a little indignantly.

Kathie did not reply. She looked somewhat wistfully into her face.

"Now tell me what you are thinking of," Una cried impulsively.

The rich colour mounted to Kathie's cheeks.

"Grandfeyther didn't say it," she faltered; "but I was wonderin', Missy, if death would be risky for you. 'Tis only what you have told me yourself."

Una was struck dumb.

Death risky for her! The thought appalled her. Then after a few moments' silence she gave a little laugh.

"The lifeboat wouldn't be worth much if we got drowned, Kathie! It's ridiculous! Of course there is a certain risk, but it is a very small one. Tell me more about it."

"The gentleman offered a lot of gold pieces to us

all, but grandfeyther said no. He were wonderful joyful over bein' saved."

The conversation was interrupted here by a shrill scream of terror outside.

Una opened the door, and dashed out into the street, directly she saw the cause of it. It was poor old Patty Jessop who was being chased along by a band of boys, using sticks and stones as missiles against her.

They stopped when they saw Una, having a wholesome fear of her tongue.

"You cruel, wicked boys, how dare you treat her so! Leave her alone at once!"

"Her have sucked a boat an' crew into the Witches' Hole," muttered the biggest of them sullenly. "Her be fit to be burnt, an' her laughs at us! Us will larn her better!"

Old Patty, who was crouching against the wall, now straightened herself, seeing her protector.

Swinging herself up on the top of an old stone gate post, she stretched out her hands and pointed to the sea.

"Bodies snatched from body snatchers!" she shrieked; "ships an' cargo an' gold will never come to this kind port no more! Watch, an' wait, curse, an' weep, fish will be all that the sea means to give ye!"

A brick in the hands of one of her persecutors was flung at her, but Una intercepted it, and turned with flashing eyes upon the boys.

"Go back, you cowards, and leave the poor old

creature alone! If you don't obey me I will take your names, and summon you for assault. Do you hear what I say?"

"Her be a witch," the boldest of the lads asserted; "her knoweth where that black boat did come from, an' her be mockin' us!"

The lads pressed forward, for once heedless of Una's words. Worse than mischief was in their faces, and Una began to fear for the old woman's safety. To her inexpressible relief, she saw her husband approaching. It wanted only a word of explanation to him, and in a moment he had dispersed the boys. Cuthbert was held in great awe and respect by the fishers; they saw little and heard little of him, but he had been elected one of the county magistrates; and was in their eyes a great dignitary.

Old Patty left her high perch, and came up to Una, dropping a curtsey.

"A brave husband, me dear, one that needeth to be master in his own house, an' to be taken into secret counsels! Best not leave him at home on a stormy night, for it takes many to fight the cruel sea, an' them that be in league wi' 'un!"

Una looked startled, and then said soothingly: "Now go away, Patty, and to-morrow the boys will have forgotten all about it."

She turned with her husband.

"The first time you have come to my rescue," she said, laughing. "If my right arm hadn't been so useless, I shouldn't have cared, but I felt it impossible to

protect her. How cowardly boys are! What has brought you out at this time of the morning?"

"To look for you," Cuthbert replied promptly.

"You are not going to turn yourself into a kind of prison warder?" Una said, turning mischievous eyes upon him.

"I have left the society of my books for that of my wife's. Is that strange?"

Again that masterful ring in his voice. Una was perplexed.

"It is so silly to be walking about together like this," she said. "I really would rather be alone, if you do not mind."

Then Cuthbert turned and faced her.

"Una, will you be content to walk alone for the rest of your life? We have been mistaken. You are such a child that you do not realize the mistake. But I am finding out that I want my little wife more with me. It is not right for us to live our lives apart. We ought to be one, in purpose, in will, in heart."

Una was silent. They were nearing the cliff at the extremity of the village street before she spoke.

"I don't understand you."

Her voice was slow and even.

"Then you must learn to understand me."

Cuthbert's tone was passionate. He stopped when they were alone on the short-tufted grass near the cliff's edge, and taking both her hands in his, made her face him.

"Una, we have been a strange kind of married couple

up to now. I was content as long as I was engrossed in my book, but now I want something more. This sounds selfish, in fact I have been telling myself that I have been a selfish brute throughout. The other day when I so nearly lost you, I was enlightened. Do you not think we could bridge over a little of the distance between us, and draw nearer together? Will you try?"

Una gazed at him with steady troubled eyes.

"I am sorry, Cuthbert, but I do not see what it is that you want. We are good friends, are we not? I think we are quite near enough to each other. Our interests will never be the same. I do not care for books, and you do not care for boats. We are happy apart. Why do you want to stir up everything, and make changes?"

Cuthbert dropped her hands in despair.

"You are a little iceberg," he said moodily; "no feeling, no heart! We have made a mistake. I will not worry you longer with my presence."

He strode away from her, angry, baffled, and perplexed, for love was dawning in his heart for his young wife, and it seemed hard to meet with no response. Una shook her head with a little sigh, as she gazed after him.

"He is a handsomer man than Duncan, but he is beginning to make me a little shy with him. He talks so strangely, and his eyes are so piercing. I wish he would write another book, then he would forget me again. What does he mean by bridging over the dis-

tance between us, I wonder? With what could we bridge it over? I will ask Kathie. But I am perfectly certain that I do not want to draw nearer to him. I will go back to Kathie now. I left her so suddenly."

Following her impulse, she retraced her steps. She found Kathie peeling some potatoes for dinner, and singing as she did so.

Una looked at her thoughtfully.

"Don't you wish sometimes you were a girl again, Kathie, with no husband or house to look after?"

Kathie laughed merrily.

"I have always had a house to look after since I remember," she said. "I would die if I had no husband, I think!"

"How very strange! My husband has just been talking to me so queerly. He says he wants the distance bridged over between us. What does he mean?"

"'Tis the bridge of love will do that," said Kathie, nodding her head wisely. "An' if you'll excuse plain speakin', Missy, 'tis what has been wantin' wi' you, I fancy!"

"Oh, Kathie! that is all nonsense! I have much too important interests in hand to spend my time as my cousin and Mr. Thiselthwaite do. My husband would not wish it. It would tire me to death if I were to try."

"But 'tis a wife's duty to love her husband," said Kathie, with sparkling eyes. "An' it seemeth to me that the Lord do mean husband and wife to be just

one entirely, to fit in wi' each other, an' be quite unhappy away from themselves. Like——”

Kathie stopped for want of a simile, then added quickly, “Like a cup and saucer, always used together, an' lookin' odd apart.”

It was Una's turn to laugh now.

“You do say such things! When will Jim be home? I want to hear every detail about this strange yacht. I do hope none of the boys will go near the Witches' Hole and discover our secret. I live in constant fear of that. I wonder if old Patty knows about it. She seems to find out everything.”

She repeated Patty's words to Kathie, and both girls agreed that it sounded very disquieting.

Kathie promised to tell her husband to keep a watch over the old woman, as much for the safety of their secret as her own.

And then Una left her, and made her way to Eagle's Head, where she heard a full account of the storm and rescue.

“But,” said Eli, at the end of his recital, “it seemeth to me 'twill be rare difficult to keep our rescue quiet. Tom be for the lot o' us to be masked, an' lettin' the saved ones find their way to the village to be housed. ‘Tis a dangerous trick, an' us had best trust to the Lord at the time, for 'tis not to be reckoned that another crew will take theyselves off so quiet, an' easy like.”

“It does seem difficult,” said Una thoughtfully. “I am sure we shall not hide it from the village for long,

Eli. It is impossible! We must hope when they do discover it, that they will take it kindly."

Eli shook his head doubtfully.

"I mindeth one boat smashed to pieces, an' when the lads get their blood up they won't mind breakin' bones neither!"

"We'll wait till another wreck comes," Una responded lightly. She was not one who anticipated evil. Her outlook on the world in general was a very sunny one. Eli glanced at her bright, glowing face with a wise smile, then he said with a shake of his grey locks, "We'll trust and not be afraid, Missy, for in the Lord is our help!"

CHAPTER XIII.

BAULKED OF THEIR PREY

“The sailors eyed the bags and thought:
‘The gold is good, the man is nought—
And who shall track the wave
That opens for his grave?’”

George Eliot, *Arion*.

That gale was not the last one. The ocean seemed stilled for a day or two, then a fresh disturbance came across the Atlantic, and again it was lashed into fury. Day by day the storm seemed to increase in violence, and all the population of Perrancove were keeping an eager watch for unfortunate vessels passing by.

The Tanners were as eager as any, and by night and day anxiously scanned the turbulent sea in front of them. Una, too, was restless and ill at ease. Her arm was healing rapidly. If there was call for her services, would her husband again prevent her going out, she wondered.

One afternoon when Duncan Thiselthwaite was spending the day at the Towers, Una put on her oil-skins and wandered down to the beach. She could hardly keep her feet, such was the violence of the wind, and with the greatest difficulty made her way to the strong granite wall that acted as a breakwater, and

sheltered some of the nearest fishers' cottages, from the raging elements.

Leaning on this wall were a dozen or so of the fishers, and presently a stir went through them.

"See yon vessel? Her be out o' her course!"

"Ay, an' her mizzen-mast be snapped."

"Her be driftin' this way."

"Ay, lend us the glass. Doomed she be, sure enough."

"They be anchorin'!"

"Ay, her capt'in knoweth these rocks, but her'll break up where her be anchored."

"There goeth his gun. Now may the Lord save 'un, for us can do nought!"

One glance showed Una the vessel standing well at sea, by the farther side of the Witches' Hole, but she and the other onlookers knew that the force of the current there would soon break her from her anchorage and drive her on to the fatal rocks. Swiftly and silently Una sped up the village street, and up to the top of the cliffs above. It did not take her long to make her way to the abode of the *Triumph*. She heaved a breath of relief when she arrived undisturbed, and found the three Tanners in their oilskins preparing to launch the boat. Kathie was there, too, and greeted her with a radiant smile.

"Ah, Missy, gran'feyther were just sayin' he would like another to take the helm."

"Cannot I take an oar?"

Eli looked at her and shook his head.

“Not with a maimed arm, Missy. ’Tis a wild tempest, an’ needs the strongest muscles us have got.”

“It is not dark; the village will see us!” said Una.

The others made no reply. She felt a thrill of excitement run through her veins when through blinding spray and howling gusts of wind she scrambled into the boat.

The rudder was in her hand, the four others oars in hand, when through the rush of waves and wind came Eli’s voice:

“Now, Almighty God, give us strength to rescue, and hearts ready to meet Thee, shouldest Thou see fit to call us!”

The words fell upon Una’s ears with a shock, and she did not join in the hearty “Amen” that followed.

Fixing her eyes on the distant vessel, she tried to give her thoughts likewise to it, but all in vain. She truly had told Mr. Endicott that she feared nothing; and now, with the waves rising up with an awful hiss and roar around her, until it seemed a perfect miracle that the boat could rise above them, she only felt her blood tingling with excitement. It was not the waves or wind that appalled her; it was the thought of in a moment finding herself called to meet God. She realized as she never had before her infinite insignificance and her Creator’s infinite holiness and power.

Almost unconsciously she found herself repeating, “Prepare my heart to meet Thee.”

It seemed a very long time to her before they reached the disabled vessel. In the distance to the right of them lay the village of Perrancove. Lights were already beginning to twinkle in many windows, the granite wall seemed thick with moving figures, and Una wondered whether they were taking note of the *Triumph's* crew through their telescopes.

Eli, Tom and Jim were drawing long deep breaths of labour. Kathie, with the perspiration running from her brow, and lips closed in firm determination to suffer and be silent, was pulling as well as any of them. Not a word was uttered until a loud cheer from the ship's crew, now close at hand, brought a gleam of brightness to the rugged faces of the Tanners. Then Eli spoke.

“Please God we'll save 'em!”

Then ensued ten minutes of intense anxiety, as the boiling sea seemed in Una's sight to be some fierce monster using all its powers of strength and fury to frustrate the *Triumph's* progress. Twice they had to back, and once the contents of a huge wave almost swamped them out of their seats. At last a rope was flung over the side of the distressed vessel, which Eli made secure, and then one after another of the crew lowered themselves.

“Any women or children?” Tom called out hoarsely.

“Only my boy,” was the response from the captain, and through the gloom and blinding spray Una caught sight of a white baby face with terror-stricken eyes

pressed closely against the captain's side. He was lowered, and Una instinctively held out her arms for him.

He nestled against her.

"Is my father safe?" he whispered.

"He will be," said Una cheerfully.

But the *Triumph* was now loaded, and the captain and others were still left behind.

"Us will return," Eli shouted cheerily, and some of the rescued crew took the oars out of the hands of their rescuers and rowed away with a will through the rushing breakers. It was hard work, for the boat was heavily laden; but steadily and warily they approached the shore, and landed without any mishap. Then there was a hasty consultation amongst the Tanners. Una and Kathie were told to stay behind; two of the rescued crew took their place, and, after passing round a flask of spirits, the exhausted rowers again took their places, and the *Triumph* was launched for a second time. In silence the little party stood in the shelter of the Witches' Hole, gazing with strained eyes at the brave little lifeboat. It seemed hours to Una before they saw her making her way back, but she arrived at last, and with a glad cry the little lad sprang into his father's arms.

Una and Kathie had instinctively shrunk away from observation into the darkest recess of the cave, but Una now glided softly to Eli's side.

"What are we to do? How house them all?"

The old man was prepared with his answer.



UNA HELD OUT HER ARMS FOR HIM.

“Run ye home, Missy, as fast as ye can; get your clothes changed quickly, an’ I’ll send the captin and his chief mates to the Towers to be lodged. The others must make their way to the village. Us be goin’ to blindfold ’em, so as not to tell on our outlet from this harbour. I be goin’ to give the captin a hint of how matters be, an’ bind ’un to secrecy! Take Kathie wi’ ye, Missy. ’Tis best for ’em not to know two wimen be in it!”

Una and Kathie slipped away without another word; and, once up on the top of the cliff, Una sped home like a young greyhound. She slipped in at her turret door, disposed of her oilskins, and a very few minutes after came to the drawing-room rosy and breathless, but with a sedate demeanour.

She found Duncan and Marjorie by the fire. Marjorie looked up with the pretty soft flush on her cheek that was always there when her lover was by her side.

“Here comes the truant! Where has your highness been? Down to the beach, I warrant. You bring in with you an atmosphere of salt spray and fish!”

“Nothing so unromantic as fish!” expostulated Duncan gallantly. “A fresh breezy element always surrounds Mrs. Gregson. It is exhilarating and refreshing.”

“I have come across the cliffs,” said Una abruptly. “A vessel has been in distress, and her crew are coming ashore. Where is Cuthbert?”

“He was here but a few minutes ago. Baldwin

came in excitedly with somewhat of the same tale. **H**e went out to see if he could help in any way!"

"And here I sit," said Duncan, after a quick glance at Una, "deserving the contempt that meets me in the eyes of Mrs. Gregson! I have many excuses ready to explain away such conduct. But the love light that shines forth from the face of my queen is a stronger magnet than the howling wind and waves; and I know that my hands and feet are helpless where my heart cannot accompany them."

"Oh, I am glad," cried Una impetuously, "that my heart contains more than one in its interests and affections!"

Then, turning her back upon the fireside couple, she stood at the casement window trying in vain to penetrate the darkness that was now settling down without.

Presently a bustle was heard in the hall—strange voices—and then Cuthbert flung open the drawing-room door suddenly.

"Una? Oh, there you are! Come and offer your hospitality to some who need it."

Una stepped out into the hall with a little catch in her breath. Truly she had a difficult part to play.

The captain and his little son were there, and half a dozen more. She was thankful that in giving directions to her servants to prepare rooms for them, and in seeing that food and change of clothing were provided, the topic of their rescue was not touched upon. But when, later on, they were rested and refreshed, and

the captain was sitting talking with her husband, Una felt embarrassed and uncomfortable.

“I cannot understand how you were rescued,” Cuthbert said. “Our fishers say it is an impossibility on this coast. Did you lower one of your own boats and get to shore?”

The captain shook his head.

“Our boats would not have weathered such breakers. Our rescuers came to our aid with brave hearts and strong arms. I do not know your coast nor its capabilities for harbourage. And our rescue seems wrapped in mystery. I am not over-curious to unravel it, for our safety has been accomplished, and that is my chief cause for thankfulness. But I am anxious to save some of my salvage that will doubtless be washed ashore. I fear my vessel is fast breaking up. With your leave I will make my way to the beach, and with the help of my crew endeavour to secure as much of it as I can. I am on my way from Plymouth to Cork. It is long since we have encountered such a gale on this coast!”

“I doubt if you will see much of your salvage,” said Duncan, with a light laugh. “There are a great many others interested in that besides yourself.”

The captain looked at him sternly.

“I know the tricks of the coast,” he said, “and marvel that gentlemen living on it suffer such deeds to be done.”

“They are mostly in ignorance of it,” said Cuthbert warmly. “But it shall never be said that I harboured

the owners and left their property to be the prey of idlers. Come, if you are ready, I am; and Thiselthwaite, you will accompany us. I am a magistrate, and I will send for the coastguards of the nearest station to us if there is any disturbance."

Una's eyes sparkled at her husband's determined tone. She sprang up, eager to go with them, when the little boy moved towards her, and in a shrill voice exclaimed—

"Father, this lady has the eyes of the sailor who nursed me in the boat!"

The captain laughed, but Marjorie shot a keen glance at Una, who felt the scarlet colour mounting to her cheeks.

"There are many grey eyes in the world, my boy," he said quietly. "Will you not go to bed now? You must be sleepy."

"Come to me," said Marjorie, suddenly holding out her arms to him. "I will take care of you till your father returns. Tell me all about your shipwreck, and the boat that came to your aid."

The little fellow went shyly towards her. Una left the two with much misgivings. How much, or how little did Marjorie suspect, she wondered! What would be the end of it all?

"I think, Una, it is too rough a night for you," said Cuthbert a few minutes later, as his wife crept up to his side coaxingly. She was not clad in her oilskins, but in a thick shawl and woolen cap.

"Oh no, I will keep close to you."

She could have chosen no better plea. To have his little wife in his close presence was Cuthbert's increasing desire.

The party made their way down to the beach. There were torches on the rocks, and clusters of fishers as near the ocean's edge as they dared to venture.

"He broke up nigh an hour ago," was the reply of a fisher lad to the inquiry made of him.

The small inn on the quay was discarding some of its guests; amongst them a good few of the saved crew. They recognized their captain, and joined him as he approached the shore.

"Lads," he said, "I want to save my cargo. Those that give a hand shall be rewarded. Follow me."

The fishers looked on in sullen wonder. As Una saw their black scowls and bitter glances, she felt for the first time in her life that it was good to have a husband by her side.

Cuthbert seemed to have cast off all his lethargy and dreaminess. His step was brisk, his eye keen and penetrating in its glance; and when he presently saw in the dark shadow of some rocks some two or three men bringing with caution several casks to shore, he strode up to them with great deliberation.

"That is right, my lads," he sang out in a hearty voice that rang through wind and storm, and made itself heard to those around. "I have come down to ask you to lend a hand in rescuing the property of Captain Berry. I told him he would find scores of us Perrancove folk only too willing to aid him. Heave

all that comes ashore up the beach out of high water, and we will ship it off to-morrow. One of you will lend your fishing smack for the purpose."

If a bomb had exploded in their midst the fishers could not have shown more consternation and dismay. Muttered oaths and curses followed, and then all were startled by old Patty's shrill cracked voice singing in a high-pitched key—

"Wash it ashore,
Our treasure no more!
Out of our grasp, the crew an' their gold,
Struggle an' fight
Wi' all your might,
Gone is our share, as in the days o' old!"

Her rhyme seemed to intensify the bitterness of spirit in which many of the fishers watched the active crew seize hold of the various bits of salvage from their wreck now coming in with the rolling tide. Not a hand did they outstretch to help them; but some more daring spirits at the extremity of the beach broke in one end of a cask of rum and began imbibing very freely. Cuthbert soon grasped the situation. Duncan volunteered to ride off to the coastguard station for help, and Una was told to return home as quickly as possible.

It was in vain she protested; one of the house servants was sent back with her, and she spent the rest of the evening in direful surmises. Marjorie had retired to bed. For that Una was thankful, but there was no rest for her; and when after a couple of hours' wait-

ing she heard her husband's voice in the hall, she sprang into his arms with a little sob in her voice.

"What have you been doing? I know there has been fighting! I heard some shots!"

Cuthbert put his arm tenderly around her.

"Frightened, poor child! Yes, we have had a bit of a scrimmage. Drink maddened some of them. Captain Berry has been stunned by a blow, and some of his crew badly handled. Upon my word, Una, our fishers have shown up in a new light! Robbery and violence are no crimes in their eyes! We had to give them a taste of our powder before they would quiet down. And even now I fear the preventive officers will find it a tough job to wrench some of the salvage from them. But there, these things are not for ladies' ears. You had better go to bed. I must see to the Captain. His men are bringing him in."

But Una would not be so dismissed; she waited till Captain Berry appeared with a bandaged head, and with only partially recovered consciousness. And then after seeing to his needs she followed her husband into his study, where she insisted upon him taking some refreshment.

"You are new to this," she said gravely; and Cuthbert, tired and exhausted as he was, laughed at the maternal anxiety in her tone.

"And you?" he said. "To hear you, one would think you were well accustomed to such carousals!"

"I know our people better than you do," she responded earnestly. "They have regarded wrecked

vessels as their rightful prey for so long that you cannot expect them to look upon your actions to-night with indifference. You have roused all the fighting blood that is in them; and this is only the beginning of worse to follow."

"Oh, tut, tut! You listen to old Patty's croaks! How does she always contrive to come upon the scene when one least wants her? Now my work is done for the night at least. Did I tell you old Martin Tregarth has been taken into custody? He is to be brought before me to-morrow. He has nearly killed one of Berry's men."

Una's heart sank within her. As she lay her head on the pillow that night she said under her breath—

"Perhaps the *Triumph* is bringing trouble as well as blessing to us all!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE *FLYING GULL*

“Comfort her, comfort her, all things good!

While I am over the sea,
Let me and my passionate love go by;
But speak to her all things holy and high,
Whatever happen to me!”

Tennyson “Maud.”

There was indeed trouble in Perran Cove. The fishers as a body were full of wrath. They had been so long uninterrupted in their course of taking possession of all that was washed ashore, that they considered themselves an aggrieved and injured community. And the mystery of the rescue perplexed and enraged them. They plied some of the rescued crew with drink, and questioned them eagerly and persistently. But their information was vague and unsatisfactory.

“When a chap be hurled through the darkness into a boat, and the waves be mountains high, and the spray blindin’ and chokin’ of him, he doth not look at the make o’ the craft he be in, nor yet at the crew. They be ordinary flesh and blood, that I’ll stake my life on, an’ powerful good rowers. An’ when us landed’ t’were on a pitch-dark beach; but there were one queer fac’ consarnin’ it. Us were blindfolded and hauled up

to a height, and told to make our way to the fishin' village, an' when us tore off the bandages, us found oursel's on the cliff top and the lights o' this port in the distance an' no sign o' the crew, nor the boat, nor yet the way we'd come by."

This was the longest statement, by the most clear-headed seaman; and no one was much the wiser for it. There were some broken heads and bruised limbs amongst the fishers. Martin was leniently dealt with, but severely cautioned by Cuthbert in his attitude as justice of the peace.

"Remember," he said sternly, as he was dismissing him, "I am determined that this system of robbing and of wrecking—for I have heard more than you think—shall be stopped in these parts. It is our duty to save and relieve our fellow-creatures; not suffer them to drown within our reach so that we may profit by their deaths. If the man you attacked so savagely last night had died, I should have committed you for murder. As it is, it is a serious case of assault, and if you were not such an old man, and he had not drawn his cutlass, your sentence would be a heavy one."

Martin listened, and went his way in sullen silence. He, with several other like spirits, met at the "Blue Lobster," and night by night discussed their wrongs and imbibed very freely of the bad beer sold there.

All of them were fully determined to stand by each other, and to discover the whereabouts of the crew and boat that had brought such mischief amongst

them. The Tanners were brought under discussion, but their boat was like most of those in the village, and it was the build of the unknown craft that so puzzled the fishers.

At the Towers there was much talk also; even after Captain Berry and his men had taken their departure.

"There's a deep mystery somewhere," said Marjorie one morning, when the topic was touched upon at breakfast.

"And the Witches' Hole is not responsible for that rescue boat. Who owns a lifeboat near, Cuthbert?"

"There is none nearer than Port Cranstone," he replied promptly.

"Una, do you know nothing about it?"

Marjorie's point-blank question filled Una with dismay.

"What makes you turn to me?" she said, trying to laugh. "Do you think me more clever at discovering mysteries than my husband?"

"I think you know every inch of the coast, and every person along it," retorted Marjorie sharply; "and your amusements and interests are quite apart from your home."

Una went on eating her breakfast, apparently with the greatest unconcern. In reality her heart was throbbing painfully.

Cuthbert looked across at her with a smile.

"Una knows a good deal about shrimping and lobster-pots," he said gaily to his sister; "she is familiar

with crabs and seaweed, and limpets. I should say that is where her maritime knowledge begins and ends. Except, indeed, how to row a boat. She has muscles that would do a man credit."

"Exactly," said Marjorie, in a meaning tone. Then she began to laugh.

"Oh, you are a funny couple! So utterly ignorant of each other's capabilities. I smile and look on, but one day, Cuthbert, your little thoughtless, childish wife will surprise you, and you in your turn will surprise her. You are not made only for your books, and she is not only made for play. I would that I could enlighten you both a little; but I bide my time. I am piecing together a puzzle, and the bits are joining slowly."

Una instinctively looked up and met her gaze.

Marjorie laughed and nodded at her.

"Yes, you may well look frightened. I am not so wholly absorbed in myself and my happiness to be oblivious of much that is going on. But I will say no more."

Cuthbert called his young wife to him in his study after breakfast.

"Una," he said gravely, "is there any truth in Marjorie's hints and inuendoes? Do you know anything about this unknown lifeboat that has appeared so suddenly when needed?"

Una clasped her hands round his arm with a pretty, childlike gesture.

"Shall I tell you what I have heard?" she said, a

little saucily. "Old Enoch firmly believes that it is all witchcraft. Patty calls up from the Witches' Hole a crew and boat by incantation. I am afraid sometimes for that poor old soul's life. If you have raised the wrath of the fisherfolk, they will most likely visit it upon her luckless head."

Cuthbert smiled, then frowned. He took hold of one of the little hands that imprisoned his arm, and spoke very gravely.

"Una, dear, listen; I have something to tell you. I shall have to go away and leave you for a little. I have been talking over matters with one of the preventive officers, and also with Duncan, who is going to do his utmost to help us. And I mean to go down to Plymouth, to try and persuade those in authority to establish a coastguard station here."

"Oh, Cuthbert, the fishers will never forgive you! They hate the coastguards. And it will look as if smuggling is carried on. We have always prided ourselves on holding aloof from that. I should hate the coastguard station so close to us."

"But, Una, do you not think this gloating over wrecks and robbing the dead as bad a crime as smuggling? I do, and I mean to do all in my power to prevent it. I do not wish you to let any one know what takes me to Plymouth; but go I shall, and that as soon as possible."

"And how long shall you be away?"

"I do not know. I have a fancy to go by sea if I can

get any one to take me. For I want to know the coast and its different harbours."

"If one of the fishers took you, and discovered your errand, he would drown you **on the way!**" exclaimed Una impetuously.

"Is there no honest or humane one amongst them?"

"Well—there are a few. Jim Tanner has a splendid smack. She is the fastest sailer I know. He might take you. He told Kathie he wanted to go to Plymouth one day. Yes, you could trust him with your errand. He would be as silent as death!"

"I will have a talk with him. Will you be lonely here without me?"

There was wistfulness in Cuthbert's eyes, but his wife's were merry with laughter.

"I have told you before that I do not know the meaning of loneliness."

"I want to go now," Cuthbert continued, stifling a sigh; "for Marjorie will be with you, and Duncan is backwards and forwards, and has promised to give you his help and protection should you need it. When I return he wishes to be married, and Marjorie is willing."

"I shall not need any one's protection," said Una a little proudly. "I like to be independent."

"I know you do," replied her husband; and there was a sad ring in his tone. As he looked at the glowing happy girl, he had not the heart to wish her self-reliance to be shaken. And yet there were times when he almost longed for some crisis to come in her life,

when the helplessness of her sex would overtake her, and she would creep up to him for shelter and comfort, and lay her curly head against his shoulder, feeling it was good to belong to him; good to realize her weakness; better to realize his strength.

As he thought of these things a look crept into his eyes that even Una noticed.

“You do not like going to Plymouth?” she said inquiringly.

“I do not like leaving you,” was the quick reply; and then, afraid of trusting himself further, he left the room, and went in quest of Jim Tanner.

His arrangements were soon made. Jim was not long in making up his mind, though he too dreaded the parting with his young wife.

When the last day came, Cuthbert called his wife again to him, and gave her many parting directions. He showed her how she could obtain more money should she require it, and gave her the address of his banker and lawyer, and when she laughingly remonstrated, saying, “One would think you were going to be away a year instead of a month,” he replied gravely, “I would leave all things in order, as if I were never coming back at all.”

“Are you afraid Jim’s smack is not seaworthy?”

“I fear nothing; but the future is never entirely certain.”

A softened look crossed Una’s face.

“I suppose not, but I hope you will come back again, Cuthbert. I should not like to be a widow.”

Cuthbert smiled at her childish tone.

“And why not? You would be entirely your own mistress then. Independence is what you love.”

“Ye-es.”

She was standing by his side, with her hand on the back of his chair, watching him arranging his papers and accounts.

For an instant she rested her hand on his shoulder, and the touch of it thrilled him through and through.

“I like to feel I have a husband,” she said, with a little laugh. “It makes me of more importance in the sight of others. And I like to feel I have some one at my back who would—well, help me when I wanted help.”

Cuthbert rose hastily from his chair. On the impulse of the moment he drew her to him, and putting his arm round her, held her fast.

“My child,” he said, “it will be a happy day for me when you do lean upon me for help and guidance. Your self-sufficiency is a real hindrance to our mutual love.”

“I don’t understand you.”

She did not break away from him, for she remembered this was their last day together. She wished it to be a pleasant one.

Her husband continued in a passionate tone—

“I would that I could wake up that sleeping heart of yours, dear; that my touch would make itself felt; that you would realize, as I have realized lately, that

we ought to be all the world to each other—that God above meant us to be so when we were made man and wife. It is not too late; you are still young, enthusiastic, and warm-hearted. You have no real dislike to me, I believe. Love, true love, may yet dawn in your breast. Am I absolutely nothing to you? Only a mere being whose existence gives you a sense of importance in your dealing with others? Have you no realization of my love for you, which is deepening daily, and which is making even this short parting an agony to me?”

Then straining her light form in a close embrace, his self-control gave way, and he showered passionate kisses on her lips, eyes, and brow, till white and breathless, Una wrenched herself away from him, and stood facing him frightened and perplexed.

“Cuthbert!” she gasped, with heaving breast. “You must not treat me so. Why are you acting so strangely?”

There was a glow and passion in Cuthbert’s eyes that did not die away as he replied a little vehemently—

“I have a right to treat you so. You belong to me—every fibre of your being—and I to you. I am leaving you, and I cannot part with you stoically. Sweetheart, we may be parting for longer than we fancy. Come to me once more, put your sweet arms round my neck; give me a parting kiss, and tell me you will try to love me.”

For an instant Una wavered. Her heart was beating

rapidly. She was shaken at last, but how much, and how deeply, she then did not realize. Some instinct made her take the step forward almost against her will, and softly she raised her little arms and placed them round his neck. Cuthbert felt as if an angel's touch was on him; he held his breath lest he should scare it away. Tremblingly her lips touched his cheek, and then she buried her burning face in his shoulder.

"I will try to love you," she murmured, "if you really want me to."

He pressed her closely to him, and a hot tear—man though he was—fell on her brown, curly head.

"Now may God help and bless us both," he exclaimed; and then, with one more long embrace, he released his hold, and Una fled to her room, wondering and trembling at this new experience, and feeling rather ashamed of it all.

She did not see her husband again till he was making his last farewells in the hall. It was a lovely afternoon, and when she expressed her intention of going down to the beach, Marjorie insisted upon accompanying her. So the two went, and met Kathie on the same errand, too. Her eyes were red with crying; but her pretty, bright smile appeared at once.

"Well, Kathie, we are both going to lose our husbands," said Una cheerfully.

"Ah, Missy, 'tis a sad tie that will be betwixt us."

"It is only for a little time. Oh, how lovely the sea is! How I wish I were going too!"

There was the usual knot of idlers on the low stone wall outside the "Blue Lobster." All the Tanners were there; and Jim, in his dark blue jersey, his crisp brown curls peeping from under his fisher's cap, looked the picture of stalwart strength and beauty.

Bobby Peeling, a little orphan lad, was going, too, and with hands in his wide trousers pockets, he was talking importantly to a few envious companions.

The sea was almost without a ripple. The steady lap of the blue waves against the shingle was the only sound to be heard. The air was crisp and cool, with a taste of salt in it. Jim's smack was ready; and now her red-brown sails were being hoisted, and all was bustle and confusion. For one moment Jim sprang out and took his wife into his arms. She clung to him with a deep sob.

"My Jim, my heart's life, come back to me, or I shall die."

"Ay, lass, God willin'! Our souls will meet at His mercy-seat night and morn; an' prayers an' thoughts wull keep us close together."

She stifled her tears and stood up bravely as he broke away from her. Tying her scarlet handkerchief round her head, and shading her eyes with her hand, she watched the smack till it was lost to sight round the corner of Eagle's Head.

Cuthbert's goodbye was not so demonstrative. He touched his wife's hand, then raised it to his lips. In the sight of the little crowd around them he felt he could do no more.

“Goodbye, little wife,” he whispered to her. “Pray that we have a good journey and a speedy return.”

She nodded, but did not speak. A lump seemed to rise in her throat and prevent all utterance. As she gazed after him and measured his figure with Jim’s she felt glad and proud that he did not suffer in comparison. And then she murmured to herself—

“If he left his books and lived on the sea, how I could enjoy being with him!”

The smack pushed off. Marjorie was gaily chattering to every one. Only the two young wives stood silent and motionless, watching the little craft that was bearing away their husbands.

Then suddenly they were startled by old Patty’s voice. She had crept up unseen, and now was standing in her favorite position on the top of an old stone pillar. Kathie shrank close to Una in fright, as her voice rang out—

“Waves be wakin’, waves be callin’,
Waves be watchin’ for thy mate,
Bonny wives! But wailin’ widders,
When your husbands meet their fate.”

Una shook off the feeling of fear that crept into her heart, and stepped up boldly to the old woman.

“Now, Patty, don’t try to frighten us by your songs. You should comfort people when they are sad; do you not know that?”

“Ay,” said the old woman, getting down from her perch and dropping Una a succession of quick curtseys one after the other, “but thee art in no



THE TWO YOUNG WIVES STOOD SILENT AND MOTIONLESS.

need o' comfort, my pretty! Sadness hath not touched thee yet, but 'tis on the way,

'Tis flyin' fast and free
'Over the deep blue sea.'

An' then will Patty comfort the weepin' eyes that be now only filled wi' laughter."

"Oh, come along, Una," said Marjorie, a little impatiently. "She will be turning to me and saying something gruesome next. I hate her sharp little twinkling eyes. I believe she is, as they say, a witch."

"I will come and see you, Kathie, to-morrow."

Una laid her hand on Kathie's as she spoke, and two tear-dimmed eyes were quickly raised to hers.

"Bless you, Missy! I will love to have you. 'Tis a lonely house I go back to."

The girls separated; but after they had gone the fishers drew nearer together, and black looks and muttered curses were rife as they speculated on the possible errand of the *Flying Gull*, Jim's fast sailing-boat.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

“You may know him by his company.”

Wycherley.

When Una went to Kathie's cottage the next morning she found her at her usual household tasks.

“I must keep busy, Missy; an' I thought I'd go but fishin' with feyther this afternoon.”

She always called Tom “feyther,” and she was indeed a good daughter to him.

“That will be lovely,” exclaimed Una; “and I will bring my boat and come too. We shall thoroughly enjoy it.”

Kathie shook her head doubtfully.

“I will try an' make out as I do,” she returned. “But my body be lackin' a heart; for 'tis Jim has that bit of me, an' he be far enough off by this time.”

“Oh, Kathie, how you talk! I wonder, if you feel as you say, that you can go on living so cheerfully. I am quite sure it is a bad plan to get so fond of any one that you feel miserable without them.”

“Not miserable, Missy. Thank God, not that. Not while I have a Father an' a Saviour above who love me an' care for me. 'Tis only Jim an' me have been tied up together in the same bundle o' life by

God Himself. Us never shall be complete now wi'out each other, on earth nor in heaven."

Una was silent. She gazed at the rapt look which crept into Kathie's eyes, and wondered.

"I wish I was good, like you," she said meditatively.

"Oh, Missy, hush!"

"You needn't hush me. You know you are good. You love God, and God loves you; and if you died you tell me you are sure you would go straight to heaven. How can you be sure? Tell me that."

Una sat down on the window-ledge, and fingering a flowering myrtle there, looked up a little anxiously for Kathie's reply.

Kathie stopped washing up her crockery. She took a seat by the table, and putting her elbows on it, leant her chin in her hands, and returned Una's look with a very earnest one.

"Missy, I always like gran'feyther's talk. He be so simple. 'Tis because I got into the lifeboat that I know I'm safe for heaven's port."

"Yes," said Una thoughtfully; "I suppose that is it. And the Lifeboat is our Lord Jesus Christ. I have always one verse ringing in my head, Kathie, and I cannot get rid of it: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father except by Me.' I heard it in a sermon here once; and I can't say I do not know the way; but what I feel is that I do not know how to get into it, and to know that I am really there."

"There was not much time lost the t'other night,

Missy, when us came alongside o' that sinkin' crew. They didn't ask no questions, they just tumbled in an' they didn't want to know if they were really in or not. They trusted an' they asked no questions."

"They really felt they were sinking; but my boat is sailing along fairly well. It is only when a squall comes that I want the lifeboat, and when it goes, and there is fine weather again, I forget all about it."

Una's brows were knitted as she spoke.

"The devil fills our minds wi' excuses," said Kathie sadly. "First it is we don't know how to step in, an' then we'll wait till the weather be rougher. I think, Missy, 'tis best to step in when the waves be not over-high; 'tis a pity to wait till we be hangin' 'twixt life an' death. An' as for the steppin' in, why the dear Lord be so near at all times that if we cannot see our way to step we can just drop our awn oars, an' lift up our arms, crying, 'Lord, Lord, lift me in Thyself.' That little lad o' the captain's the t'other night, he were just taken clean into gran'feyther's arms an' put down in safety. He had to be willin' to be taken, that was all."

"Yes," said Una, deeply moved by the earnest longing in Kathie's voice, and hastily brushing away the tears that had started to her eyes. "I know it is a question of one's will. But I can't drop my own oars yet, Kathie; and that is the fact. Oh, I wish there was another way. It would be easier if we had to work hard ourselves, instead of just do nothing but trust."

“Another way, Missy!”

Kathie's tone had a hurt, indignant ring in it. “’Tis ungrateful to wish that, when the dear Lord opened this way at such a cost. As Jim told me when I was learnin’ about it, ’twas the Lord’s own glory an’ happiness an’ life He gave up, so as not to let one of us miss it. Findin’ fault because the way is free, Missy! Oh, thank God! it is that, or where should us be, poor, helpless, dyin’ sinners? An’ ’tis not an idle life us be called to. Once in the Lifeboat, there be pullin’ all the way. But step in an’ pull! That be the way. ’Tis not pullin’ that will help you to step in!”

Una left her soon after, but Kathie’s words returned to her again and again, and she thought much of them.

Kathie watched her go, and murmured to herself, “Missy’s craft have always been in still waters. I cannot bring myself to wish her a storm, but I do pray wi’ all my heart that her may step into the Lifeboat soon!”

Time seemed to pass but slowly to Una now. She missed her husband in a thousand little ways. Independence seemed to have lost its charm, and she almost began to envy Majorie, whose plans and purposes were wholly regulated by her lover.

One afternoon Una came up from the beach after a long row round the coast. She was tired; the day was warm, and she felt a strange kind of depression

come over her as she entered the house—a depression for which she could not account.

Baldwin met her looking agitated and perplexed.

“A gentleman hath ridden over from Kingstawton, mistress. He saith he be goin’ to have his luggage foller him. An’ he waiteth in the master’s study to see you.”

“What name did he give?” asked Una, with wide-open eyes.

“Carteret,” he saith.

Una stayed to hear no more. She impetuously threw open the study door, and then stopped a little disconcerted at the sight of the stranger within.

He was an old man with white hair and beard; he was raising a glass of whisky-and-water to his lips; and his hand shook visibly as he did so. His face, in spite of his venerable appearance, was not a pleasant one; his eyes were shifty and restless; dissipation was stamped on every feature. Yet when he rose to his feet, and made a courteous bow, no one would have suspected him to be other than a true gentleman.

“Have I the pleasure of speaking to Mrs. Gregson?”

“You have, sir,” Una said, a little shyly, as she dropped her orthodox curtesy.

“And was Mrs. Gregson once Una Carteret?”

“Yes, that was my name.”

“Then Una, my child, look at me, and behold in me your father.”

“My father?”

Una repeated the words mechanically. She was dazed by such a statement.

“My father is dead,” she went on. “How can you be my father?”

“Have you ever seen your father’s grave?”

“No, but I thought—I have always been told I was an orphan.”

Mr. Carteret cast up his eyes in pious horror.

“In such a way do they seek to complete the alienation of parent and daughter! No, my child, your father is alive; and he placed his child in safe custody many years ago, before he began to wander over the face of the earth. He has at length returned to the place of his forefathers, and seeks out at once his only child!”

There was a theatrical pose in his manner which puzzled Una. And after a sharp glance at his daughter, Mr. Carteret adopted a different tone.

“Una, my dear, I may seem a stranger to you, but you have been in my thoughts many years, and when I heard of Mr. Endicott’s sad death, I resolved to come home to offer you my protection. It was only on my journey here that I heard you were already married; and it was a shock, a distinct shock to my feelings. I find your husband is away from home. I hope he is a worthy and estimable man?”

“He is all that you could wish,” said Una, feeling as if she were in a dream. She stood grasping the back of her husband’s chair, and wishing he were at home.

And then, making an effort to be at ease, she sprang forward.

“If you are indeed my father,” she said, “I welcome you with all my heart. I will try to make you happy here.”

And lifting up her glowing face, she kissed him.

“I am so glad,” she went on gaily, “that I have some one who really and truly belongs to me. I have all my life longed for a relation. I cannot understand why Mr. Endicott never talked to me about you.”

“He was a peculiar man,” Mr. Carteret said, as he patted her shoulder, then turned to the whisky and helped himself to another glass of that beverage.”

“He always gave me to understand that he intended you to be his heiress, and wished to superintend your education and training himself. I would not stand in your way, though it cut me to the heart to leave you. I knew you would be well cared for, and I have heard of you from time to time. I conclude this property is yours, is it not?”

“I—I—suppose it is,” stammered Una. “I have never thought much about it, because I have always lived here, and it seemed quite natural to go on doing so after I married. Cuthbert manages all the business part of it.”

A little frown came over Mr. Carteret’s smiling face.

“Does your husband travel? Is he away much from you?”

“Oh, no, he has never left me before, except when

he went up to London about his book, which is coming out very soon. And he is only away for a short time now!"

Mr. Carteret gave a little sigh.

"I am glad I came to my little girl in her loneliness. You will be thankful to have my help and counsel in many matters."

"Ye-es."

But Una's tone was hesitating.

"We live a very quiet life here," she said; "I have only my housekeeping to think of. And that reminds me I must leave you to make a few arrangements. I will come back soon, and take you to your room."

She left the study, feeling still as if she were in a dream; but when she found Marjorie, and told her the news, that little lady was delighted.

"How romantic! An unknown father coming upon the scene! Why it is truly delicious! I cannot bear a house without a man in it, and Duncan is absorbed this week in home matters that need his presence. I am positively dying to see him! May I go and entertain him now?"

When Una returned a little time later she found Marjorie bewitching the old man with her airs and graces.

"Ah!" she said to Una, when Mr. Carteret had gone upstairs to his room and the girls were alone together, "your father has seen the world; he knows; he has mixed with all sorts and conditions! And oh, how mightily amusing he is! Some of his stories would

shock you! But I could not keep my laughter back. He will enliven our dull hours. Indeed, he is a pleasant addition to our household!"

But before many days elapsed Una began to be a little perplexed and anxious. Her father was introducing a fresh element into the house. He kept late hours, he smoked and drank, and swore freely if he did not obtain the most servile attentions from the servants of the household. He borrowed money from his daughter, and confided to her that lately he had found it a struggle to live.

After the first feelings of delight at owning a parent, Una began to feel a sensation of shame that Mr. Carteret should have such tastes as he possessed. When Duncan came over, the gentlemen adjourned to the billiard-room or spent their time over cards and wine, and money was freely exchanged between them.

Duncan excused himself to his *fiancée*.

"He is an amusing old fellow, and I feel sorry for him. He says he is moped to death here, and is grateful to any one who will kill time with him. He and his daughter are as unlike as two peas! I cannot help watching her when she is with him. She has such a high idea of filial devotion, and yet every word he utters is bewilderment and pain to her!"

"Una is a baby; an innocent child," said Marjorie; "and my brother is dull and commonplace, though good. I confess to have a liking for a man not quite so perfect; but Mr. Carteret is too fond of his drink

even for me. He stays on at the dinner table long after we leave, and comes into the drawing-room afterwards too jovially. Una reminds me of a tiny child trying to manage and restrain the gambols of a huge mastiff! But she is a proud little damsel, and will not brook a word of interference from me!"

But Una did not feel a real anxiety till some friends of her father's came to see him.

Mr. Carteret had invited them before he mentioned them to his daughter; and she felt helpless to prevent it.

Even Marjorie raised her pretty eyebrows when she saw them. They were gentlemen by birth, but in nothing else. One of them, a Captain O'Flanders, was a little known to her.

"He bears a very fast reputation and has left the service; in truth he was cashiered," she told Una. "I hear he is a professional gambler now. It is a pity that your father has invited him here."

"He is not going to stay long," was Una's quiet reply.

But Captain O'Flanders knew when he was comfortable, and so did his companions, two gentlemen who had been obliged to live in seclusion on foreign shores for many years. They led a merry life at the Towers, and by degrees lost all sense of restraint in the ladies' presence. More than once Una and Marjorie got up and left the room, and it became their endeavor to see as little as possible of them.

One afternoon Una left the house and went out for a row. She was daily now expecting her husband's return; and it was the one absorbing thought in her heart.

"Oh, Cuthbert, I want you! I want you!" was her inmost cry. As she shot out her small boat upon the rippling ocean, she raised her face with a deep-drawn breath of relief up to the fathomless blue above her.

"I am so glad to be away from it all. The house seems polluted with their presence. How can father stand their coarse jokes, their insolent bearing, their foul language?"

And then her proud little head dropped in shame, at the remembrance of some of her father's own words. Far better, she thought, to have a father lying in a quiet churchyard than one who daily tortured her by his wild and dissipated ways. Why had she never been told of his existence before? Did Cuthbert know of it, she wondered? Did he know whose blood was in her veins? And then filial loyalty upbraided her for such thoughts about her father; and distressed and bewildered, she suddenly pulled in her oars, and gave way to a passionate fit of weeping.

"I am frightened of what may happen. I do not know what they will do! Oh! if I had only some one to turn to! some one to advise me. I feel unable to do or say what I ought!"

For the first time in her life Una was feeling her own insufficiency for existing circumstances.

The sensation was not a pleasant one.

Two hours after, she returned to find Marjorie in tears on the doorstep in her lover's arms. His horses with groom were pacing the drive below.

They looked up as she approached, and Duncan strode towards her with a flushed and angry face.

"Mrs. Gregson," he said, with a stiff bow, "I am taking Marjorie to my mother's house for shelter. She has been subjected to gross insult under this roof, and it can no longer afford her the protection she needs!"

Una's face paled. She went towards Marjorie with both hands outstretched.

"Oh, Marjorie dear, what has happened? You are never going to leave me alone?"

Marjorie looked up sobbing.

"I cannot help it, Una. You must come with us. It is not fitting that you should stay. That odious Captain O'Flanders has been following me about from room to room and he tried to—tried to kiss me! And he was as drunk as he could be!"

"Drunk or not, he has got the soundest horsewhipping that I have ever given any one in my life," exclaimed Duncan hotly. "If you give me permission," he said, turning to Una, "I will clear the house for you! I will fling them out neck and crop; but as to leaving a defenceless girl in their midst, that I will not! And the sooner you clear the house of such characters the better."

"It is my father!" faltered Una.

Duncan shrugged his shoulders.

“It was an evil day that brought him to your doors. I have said my say to him; for I went straight to him and spoke my mind. And I have sworn that neither Marjorie nor myself shall set our feet inside this house till he is out of it!”

For an instant Una seemed about to plead with him; then her pride came to her rescue. She flung up her head.

“If that be your determination, I can but bid you farewell. And you too, Marjorie. The sooner the better, for your sake. I will send one of the men with your baggage later; for I conclude you have not had time to attend to it. Sorry am I to lose you. And I hope my husband will understand how it was that those he thought would help and comfort me in his absence failed me when I needed them most.”

She swept past them like a little queen; then dashed up to her own room and gave way once more that afternoon to a passionate fit of tears.

Duncan followed her. The chivalry in his nature was roused by her tone. But she would not open her door or listen to his protestations. And after a while she heard them ride away; and in her misery she again cried out—

“Oh, Cuthbert! Cuthbert! Why did you leave me?”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FLOATING SPAR

“When joy no longer soothes or cheers,
And even the hope that threw
A moment’s sparkle o’er our tears,
Is dimmed and vanished too!

Oh! Who would bear life’s stormy doom,
Did not Thy wing of love
Come brightly wafting, through the gloom,
Our peace-branch from above?

Then sorrow, touched by Thee, grows bright
With more than rapture’s ray;
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day!”

**
Moore.*

And now ensued a very dark time in Una’s life. Her father, mistaking her willing submission to his authority for want of character, grew more and more aggressive in tone and manner. The amount of money he required seemed to her to be quite incomprehensible; but she dared not refuse him anything. Honour and obedience to a parent were deeply implanted in her breast. She sometimes thought of the words she had uttered to her guardian long ago, and which she little thought would ever touch her life—

“Even if they drink themselves to death, it is the duty of their children to look after them.”

She tried gentle expostulations and entreaties with

her father; but they were of no avail. And she began to realise that her household was suffering from his influence. One or two of the younger servants were drinking heavily. The old cook and housekeeper, Mrs. Craven, came in great distress one day to say that the maids were getting their heads turned by the flatteries and attentions they received from the gentlemen.

“And mistress, my dear,” the faithful old creature added. “’Tis you yourself I be in fears of. You be so young and pretty; so unprotected, so alone, that I sits me down and haves a hearty cry again and again. Oh, when will the master be back!”

Duncan Thiselthwaite rode over for the first few days to ask if he could be of any help; but when Una dismissed him curtly and coldly, and told him she was in her own home, and would not dream of leaving it, as he suggested, he left off coming, feeling he had done his utmost on her behalf.

It seemed of little use remonstrating with her father, but she attempted it more than once.

“I do not like your friends, father. How long are they going to stay? Can you not tell them to go? I will make you comfortable and happy without them.”

“My dear,” he said uneasily; “I owe them money. —I—I—am awkwardly situated.”

“How much do you owe them? Tell me, and I will give it to you. They are making me miserable, and every one else. I would give anything to get rid of them!”

“I will try to find out.”

But he put off doing it from day to day, and Una lived for the first time in her life in an atmosphere of fear. She shunned the house, and was only happy when she was in her boat, or with Kathie.

And as days went by, and there was no tidings of the *Flying Gull*, the two young wives looked into each other's faces with anxious eyes.

"My husband said he would be back in a month," Una said. "It is six weeks to-day, and we have had no letter or message."

"It seems six years to me," said Kathie with glowing eyes. "But we'll hope on, Missy. Any day now we may see them sailin' in."

"I seem to have no hope left," Una exclaimed impetuously; "everything is black, and dreadful!"

Kathie looked at her in astonishment. She noted tired lines and shadows about her eyes that never used to be there; there was a downward droop to her lips, and a lack of that buoyancy and breeziness that was her great characteristic.

"You are ill, Missy?"

"No, I am not; I do not sleep at night, and it makes me feel dull in the daytime. That is all that is the matter with me."

Kathie shook her head at her.

"You are frettin' too much, Missy. What is it?"

And then Una sat down and burst into tears.

"Oh, Kathie, I must speak to some one! I do feel so lonely without my husband. I want him back; I feel I shall never be happy again without him. If I

could see him now, and hear him speak; if I could just lay my head on his coat sleeve, and know it was really and truly him, I think I should go wild with joy."

Kathie smiled and nodded. This was after her own heart. She had long been perplexed and distressed by Una's apparent indifference to her husband. It needed only his absence, she thought, to show her dear young lady how big a part of her affection he occupied.

"Yes," she said; "us would both be crazy wi' joy if we had them by us. But, Missy, 'tis only waitin', the good Lord hath 'em in His keepin'. He doth watch over them an' us together, and it seemeth to me every night when I lay my head on my pillow and saith, 'Is he safe an' well, Lord, to-night?' that the answer cometh, 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them.' The Lord will tell me when He taketh Jim to Himself; but I be sure that that time has not come."

Una left Kathie cheered and comforted; but it needed all her spirit and courage to keep cheerful at home. She told Kathie of one trouble that was weighing on her heart; she could not tell her of the others. Her life at the Towers seemed to her like one long nightmare. And things grew worse instead of better. The old servants became anxious; and then indignant. One or two of them said that if the master was not soon returning they must leave. Baldwin said that the house would soon get a bad name in the neighbourhood; and that he would not stay to see disgrace come

upon the old place. And Una was powerless to stem the tide that was sweeping everything pure and wholesome away. Her father ruled the house, and treated her, as many women were treated in those days, as if she had no individuality or will of her own. One afternoon, about five o'clock, she was sitting with Kathie when there was a hasty knock at the door, and a near neighbour, Mrs. Catwick, put in her head excitedly.

"Missis Tanner, there be a smack just landed from Plymouth. Ye may get news of your man."

In one second both Una and Kathie were running down to the wharf. They saw a little cluster of fishers round the boat, and there were low murmurs as they approached.

"Ah, poor critter!" said one woman as Kathie passed her. "Her be allays too much taken up wi' him."

"Who be to tell 'em?" was a whisper that caught Una's ear.

In an instant she was making her way through the little group towards the seafaring stranger.

"Sir," she said; and though she tried to speak steadily, her voice trembled visibly, "have you seen anything of the *Flying Seagull*?"

The captain looked at her, then rubbed his hand through his grizzled hair.

"Have 'ee friends on that craft, mistress?"

"My husband."

"Then may the Lord help 'ee!"

And stooping down in a shamefaced sort of way, he lifted up an object that was in the centre of the little group around him, and held it out to Una's wondering eyes.

It was a long piece of wood, dark, and still damp from the salt waves that had tossed it to and fro. But there was no mistaking it, for the white painted letters that had been Jim's pride now stared his wife full in the face—*Flying Seagull*.

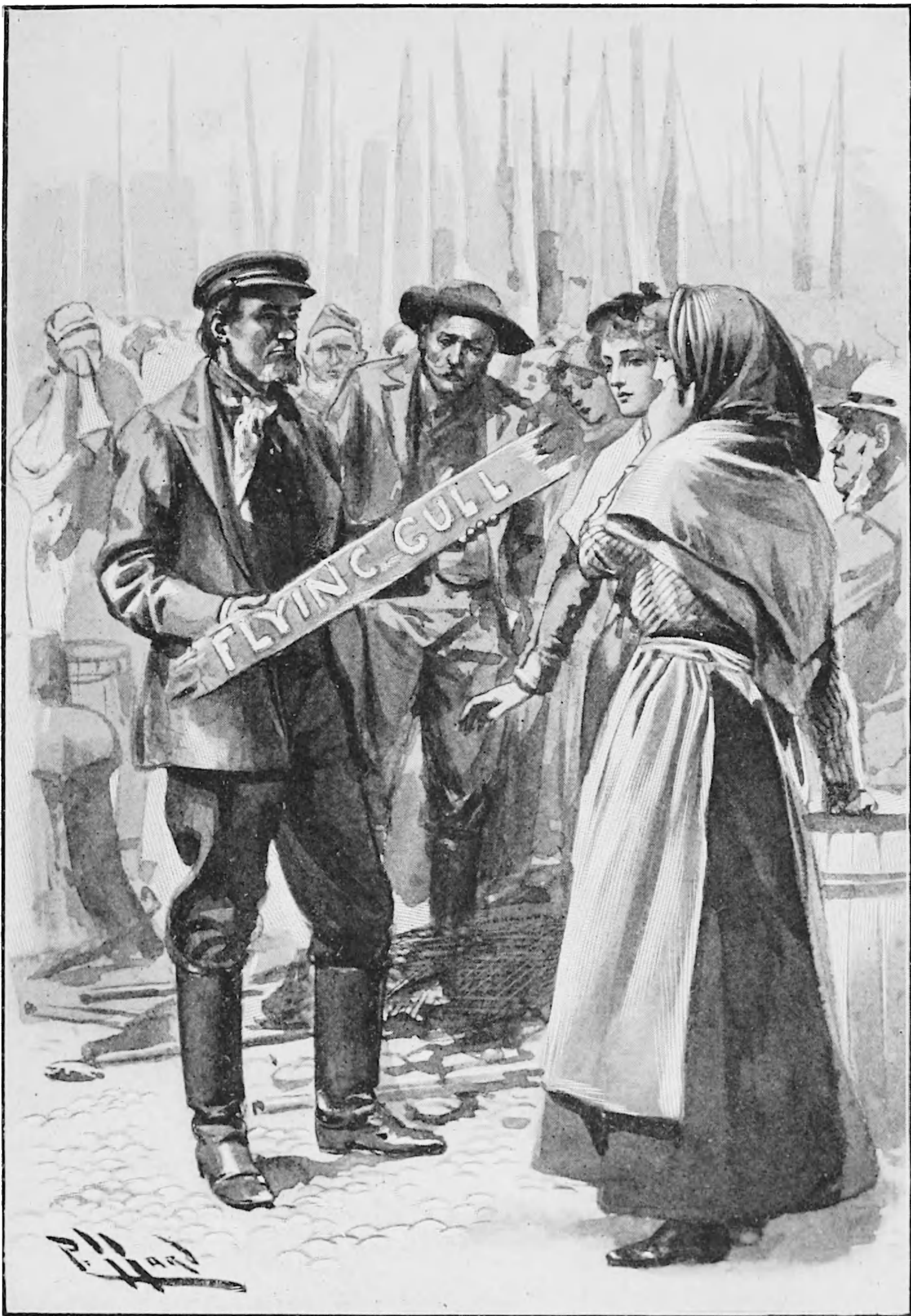
For a moment Una turned and grasped Kathie's arm.

"What does it mean?" she gasped, and the colour ebbed from cheeks and lips till it left her wan and pale.

The captain cleared his throat.

"A had a word wi' them o' this craft," he said, "an' A knowed 'twas for here they was bound. 'Twas nigh on three weeks ago they left our port. An' A telled 'em A were follerin' their track, for A hath cargo to take beyon' this. 'Twas not the gent A had speech wi'. All A heerd 'un say were, 'Tanner,' sez 'un, 'let your boat fly, man, A'm wearyin' to be home!' The young chap laughed and sez he, 'Ay, sir, us be o' one mind concarnin' that!' An' that were the last A saw of 'em. But off Crackington Haven us picked up bits o' planks that had not bin long under water, an' this bit were one on 'em. An' A felt there would be some a-watchin' for 'em, an' A brought 'un long wi' us."

Kathie and Una listened breathlessly; the crowd



HE HELD IT OUT TO UNA'S WONDERING EYES.

fell back; a few women began to sob, and lift their aprons to their eyes, but the two who were most concerned stood like stones. Then Kathie held out her arms.

“Give it to me!”

She received the bit of spar as she might a child. She hugged it to her bosom, and with rapid, determined steps sped towards her cottage.

Una looked after her wonderingly. Then she addressed the burly captain passionately—

“That cannot be their boat. There has been no storm; Jim is one of the best sailors in Perrancove! How could they drown, and no one see or hear them? Do you think we should not have known? Do you think I could have been eating and drinking and living all these days, if he was dead and gone? Tell the truth; where are they? Don’t bring us idle tales to send us mad!”

The captain shook his head helplessly.

“The Lord help ’ee!” he groaned. “A can say no more than A hath said, for the reason that A knoweth no more.”

And then Una turned, and made her way breathlessly into Kathie’s cottage. She found her on her knees, still clasping that piece of inanimate wood in her arms. But she was speaking with dry, hot eyes to an unseen Presence in her little room. Una locked the door and fell on her knees beside her.

“Father, good Lord, speak, for my heart be strainin’ wi’ longin’ an expectin’! Hast Thou got him wi’

Thee? Oh, Lord, I dursn't pray him back, I cannot turn Thee from Thy purposes o' love! I dursn't if I could. Where be he, Lord? My bonny Jim, wi' his curls an' his deep true eyes and his smile that warmed my soul through an' through! Be that part of him under the cruel lashing waves? Oh, Lord, Thou knowest the cruel power o' the sea, but Thou couldst raise a sinkin' disciple out of its grip, an' Thou hadst my Jim in the clasp of Thy strong hand; Thou didst cradle him in Thy arms. Where hast Thou taken him, Lord? For Thou knowest we are one flesh; Thou wouldest not let me live on without him! Lord, speak! oh, speak to my soul, for I be in agony, an' only Thou canst give me peace!"

Una listened dimly, but she was conscious that she had not a place in that prayer; and this consciousness brought impatience into her tone.

"Kathie, I came to you for comfort. I don't know how to pray. Don't forget my husband. Oh, do pray for him."

But for once Kathie was selfish in her agony of soul. She waved her away.

"Leave me, Missy; I must be alone. You never loved the master as I love Jim!"

Una crept out of the cottage feeling, as she did so, that the last ray of light had departed from her. She was alone in the world, she thought. No one cared for her, no one belonged to her. Even Kathie had turned her away from her door! Her father? Was he one to whom she could go for comfort? She felt

the very house would be unbearable; it was no longer a home to her; it was a place of unrest and of uncongeniality. She made her way up the village street to the lonely stretch of turf on the top of the cliffs. Her thoughts flew back to the ride she had taken there by her husband's side; and coming to the spot where her unfortunate horse had fallen over the edge, she sat down on the grass, and clasping her hands round her knees looked out upon the still ocean with dazed, tearless eyes.

It was a crisis in her life.

Sunshine around her, and easy happy circumstances, had wrapped her soul in a serene slumber. Her craft had sailed through life in fair wind and weather, and the few breezes she had met, only seemed to carry her along the better. The skies had darkened lately; but she was like some bewildered child who felt the discomfort of it, but expected every dark moment to be the last. Through all her trouble and perplexity at home, the thought of her husband's return had stood out before her mind's eye like some bright star at night. It was only a short time longer, and then her difficulties would be over, he would come to her and set things straight. And Una's heart had told her lately that Cuthbert was now all in all to her.

She thought over their parting. She felt herself in his arms, and heard him say with that quick-drawn breath of his, "Tell me you will try and love me."

Was it possible that she would never see him, never hear his voice again? Was this awful separation going to last for ever?

“Every one has left me,” she cried out in the abandonment of despair—“Miss Endicott, Mr. Endicott, Marjorie, Kathie—how can I bear this alone? How can I live on alone? If Cuthbert is dead, I have no one left! No one but God.”

“No one but God!”

Her own sentence startled her. She looked up into the sky. The sun was setting; the whole horizon was illuminated with a rosy hue. The rippling waves were edged with crimson; a golden path through the waters led to the dazzling bed into which the glorious king of day was slowly sinking.

She was always susceptible to the beauties of Nature; she watched, feeling, as she did so, that she was watching the sunset of her own life, and as the light faded in the sky she again repeated to herself—

“I have no one left but God.”

In bitter loneliness of spirit, as dusk crept slowly on, and the last golden rays sank slowly into the sea, she cried aloud—

“The sea which has been my love and life, is swallowing all I have! It has taken the light of this day, it has taken the light of my heart! It has left me no one—*No one but God!*”

She sat there still as death; she did not heed the gathering dews of night, and then at last she stretched out her hands with a heart-broken cry—

“Oh, God, Thou hast done it. Why hast Thou taken everything from me?”

It seemed to her as if a voice from Heaven whispered—

“I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil!”

She gazed out into the darkness, and again, as when she was breasting the storm in the lifeboat, a sense of her utter insignificance and the infinite greatness of God came over her.

“I have only lived for myself,” she thought; “I have only till lately loved myself. God has shown me now how empty such a life can be. I have not the realization of His love to comfort and help me as Kathie has. But I have lived like a heathen, and refused to listen when He called me. I told Kathie I was not in need of a lifeboat, for my boat was sailing along so well. I could not say so now. I see nothing but storm and blackness; and I am alone in it all. But there is God.”

A deep silence seemed to fall on her'spirit.

And then a short heartfelt prayer rose to Heaven, “Take me. I have come to an end of everything, and am helpless; oh, take me, God, and save and forgive and comfort me. For Christ's sake. Amen.”

Was it a mere coincidence that over the darkness in front of her stole a radiant silver light? And in a few minutes the moon was shedding its beams over the same waters that had swallowed up the golden light of day.

It seemed to Una's imagination that the same soft light was entering her soul. She rose at last from the ground with stiff and aching limbs; and with faltering tread made her way home. She met a little group of servants at the door, who were sallying out

in quest of her. Baldwin gazed at her wonderingly.

“Her came in,” he confided to Mrs. Craven later, “looking like some still white angel. Her eyes seemed hardly to be a-seeing of us. Her passed us without a word and went to her room. Us knowed her had a-heerd the news, but her looked as if her had bin talkin’ to departed souls, and holdin’ communications with Heaven itself!”

Mr. Carteret could not gain access to his daughter’s presence; but early the next morning a note was brought to him from her.

“MY DEAR FATHER—Will you tell your friends of the trouble that has befallen me. I am sure their good taste will take them away from a house of mourning. Make my excuses to them, for I cannot bid them farewell in person.

“Your dutiful daughter,
“UNA.”

Before nightfall came again the Towers were freed from the presence of Mr. Carteret’s friends; but Una still remained in her room.

She had taken a severe chill and was for some time confined to her bed. It was weeks before her father saw her; and then he was puzzled at the sweet gravity of her demeanour.

“I have felt for you, my dear,” he said a little awkwardly; “but you did not seem to need any comfort from me.”

“No,” she said, looking at him dreamily, “I have discovered that the One who fills the universe is sufficient to fill one poor empty soul.”

CHAPTER XVII.

A DARK TIME

“But love can hope, where reason would despair.”
Lyttelton.

And all this time Kathie and Una had not met. Kathie had more than once been up to the Towers to inquire after “Missy.” But Mrs. Craven guarded her young mistress jealously, and refused to let any one see her. She feared at one time she was going to have rheumatic fever; the doctor said she had only just escaped it. So it was not until Una was able to walk out again that she found her way down to Kathie’s cottage.

Kathie met her with outstretched hands; and then Una impulsively drew her to her, and kissed her.

“I have wanted you so.”

“Ay, Missy; an’ I have missed you sorely.”

There was a little silence. Kathie drew a chair forward and Una sat down. She looked round the cottage, and saw across the mantleshef the spar that had brought them such dire news. Above it on a piece of paper was printed in rather uneven letters—
“With God all things are possible.”

A strange light came into Una’s eyes. She turned towards Kathie impulsively—

“You don’t believe them dead, then?”

Kathie stood with folded arms, gazing at her treasured relic with a dreamy smile.

“Missy, I were near overwhelmed when I see you last. I just felt the billows closing overhead; but now I be waitin’ patiently, for the good Lord has not let me know that Jim be gone; an’ my heart feeleth as if he be still on earth!”

A thrill ran through Una’s veins. She spoke excitedly—

“Oh, Kathie, if they should come back! I have felt so uncertain how to act, but I cannot put on my widow’s weeds. You wear no black. I wondered when I saw you, but I understand now. I have put back such thoughts, but they will come; and perhaps God sends them, and men have been picked up by passing vessels before, and God may yet give them back to us. Oh, I shall begin to hope now! It is so delicious to let oneself hope.”

Kathie’s cheeks flushed.

“The neighbours have been ratin’ me, but I do not care. I pray night an’ morn that tidin’s may be sent, and I believe the answer will come.”

There was another silence, then Una said softly, “Kathie, I think I have stepped into the Lifeboat; at least, I have been lifted in, and when I feel inclined to doubt, I say to myself, ‘I have only to trust and ask no questions.’ Do you remember saying that to me?”

Kathie’s big eyes filled with tears.

“I knew you would soon come to it. I never have

forgot to pray you might. Except," she added truthfully, "that first dreadful night when us were told the news. An' now, Missy, us can have a double strong prayer for tidin's; an' us will be kept at peace the while."

The little community at Perrancove were scandalized at the young widows refusing to wear mourning. But they were firm in their refusal; and the light of patient, persistent hope shone in their eyes.

Marjorie took the gloomiest view of her brother's disappearance. She draped herself in the deepest black, and expressed strong disapproval at Una's action. She would not return to the Towers; but said that in three months she hoped to become Duncan's wife. There was nothing now to wait for; and till then, his mother had offered her a home.

Una managed her household with a little extra sweetness and dignity. Since that terrible day, her childishness seemed to have left her; but she had gained in womanly feeling and tenderness. Even her father was dimly aware that there was a quiet strength in her character, that he had not thought possible. His daughter's trouble had subdued him for the time; but he was feverishly anxious to have the control of all her money matters, and Una's disinclination to allow him, and her efforts to keep much of it in her own hands, annoyed him extremely.

"Women know nothing of business matters," he said irritably to her one day. "In place of your husband, who could advise you better than your father?";

“I want to manage everything myself. If I do not understand, I can learn.”

Then he begged her to go abroad with him.

“The change will do you good, my dear. You are young to be buried in this desolate place, with none of your own age or station near you. I will take you to Paris and try to teach you how to take life easily and gaily.”

But Una shook her head.

“Nothing will induce me to leave this spot. My husband may return. I have no proofs of his death.”

Her father laughed harshly.

“Do you need the sea to dry up, or throw up all its dead? Una, I fear this morbid imagination of yours will become a craze. I remember an old crone of ninety I met long ago, who every day walked to a certain spot to meet a lover who had been drowned seventy years before. Do you mean to spend the remaining years of your life in such hopeless waiting?”

Una shivered as she listened to her father's words. She felt so young, so strong, so full of life, that old age seemed generations off. And then she threw up her proud young head and replied—

“Kathie and I mean to wait five years, and if we hear nothing by that time, we will wear widow's weeds, and give up all hope. But till those five years have passed, we shall hope on, and no one can quench that hope by any words or persuasion!”

“'Tis crazy folly!” muttered her father; but he gave up remonstrance in the matter.

The first visit that Una paid to Eagle's Head was a sad one. Old Eli seemed almost stunned by the loss of his grandson. Tom startled her by declaring there must have been foul play.

"Yes, Missy," he said excitedly. "The *Flying Gull* were too good a craft to go to pieces in fine weather. There may be many that wish us ill, and that errand of the master's were a nasty one in the fishers' eyes. Old Martin, Enoch, and Nat Patton have leagued theirselves agen us. There be nothin' they won't do to spite us. The t'other night Patty Jessop met me comin' over the cliff. 'Eh, man,' hur sez, ' 'Tis plottin' an' wreckin' now, right fast an' furious! An' if folks 'ull strive to put an end to what plazes most on us, they be sure an' certain to meet wi' destruction. If masters be doomed, 'tis a pity young likely lads do cast in they lots wi' un!' Them be her very words, Missy, an' I cannot get 'em from me!"

"But you don't believe all old Patty says?" said Una. "She is half crazed."

"Ay, Missy, so us saith. But I know her be so sharp an' needle like, that her seeth double as far as us do. An' her be spyin' an' discoverin' all that goes on. I knoweth her be acquainted wi' our *Triumph*, an' her do have sense in all her saith."

"And do you think they would be so cruel and wicked as to tamper with Jim's boat? Oh, Tom, I cannot believe it!"

"When the drink getteth inside of 'em, they will do most anythin'," responded Tom gloomily.

“I will go straight to old Martin and confront him with it,” said Una excitedly. “He is afraid of me when I talk to him.”

“Nay, Missy, that be the worst ye could do. Us have no proofs. ’Twould enrage ’em more, an’ do no good.”

“But, Tom, surely if the boat was made unseaworthy, they would never have got to Plymouth. We know they arrived there safely, for they were seen and spoken to before they started back.”

“Ay, truly! But there be ways o’ destroyin’ slowly that be known to some evildoers. An’ maybe the *Flying Gull* were a better boat than they took her for. Well, arter all said an’ done, ’tis in the Almighty’s hands, an’ us shall find out the reason of ’un some day.”

Una retraced her steps homewards that day with painful thoughts, but she thought of Kathie’s text above her relic, and took fresh comfort and courage from it.

The spring passed, and it was a lovely day in June when Marjorie was married. It was a quiet wedding, and both Una and her father were present at it. The night before her bridal day Marjorie came into Una’s room.

“I want a good talk with you,” she said, “for we are going to Paris for our honeymoon and I may not see you for a long, long while. Oh, Una, do you think I shall be as happy as I expect to be?”

“I hope you will be,” said Una soberly. “I know Kathie has been.”

“Oh, do not quote your fisher maid to me!”

Marjorie's tone was pettish. She was sitting at Una's feet with her rippling golden hair falling in thick tresses over her shoulders. She continued—

“When I first knew you, Una, you were a simple ignorant child. I was years older in age and experience. Your married life had not developed your character in the least. I always felt that you and Cuthbert were a perfect enigma to me, and I used to feel cross—you must forgive me—that you appreciated my brother so little. I used to fear that when once the marriage knot was tied, wedded life became prosaic. You seemed to have so little in common. But when I heard your views on love, I understood, for your heart had never been awakened to love's touch. Ah, believe me, Una, 'tis a touch you cannot mistake, and I desire you should experience it. Poor Cuthbert would not have you always remain single and forlorn. I want you to come out into the world and give yourself a chance of meeting the one in life who will make you happy. Duncan admires you much; he says it is a sinful shame to shut yourself up for life in the Towers. You have money; you are independent. Go up to London and see the city's fashions and ways. Shut up your gloomy house for a time. You seem to be getting old so fast. Not in looks, my dear child, for you seem to grow in grace and beauty; but this sorrow is not one that will last you for life. Cuthbert and you were unfortunately yoked together. You may be staunch and loyal to his memory and yet——”

Una had been unable to stay her flowing tongue. Now she sprang up from her seat, and with burning cheeks and glowing eyes confronted her.

“Not a word more, Marjorie! I would not be angry with you on your wedding eve; but you have been stabbing and cutting at my heart-strings till I can stand it no longer. I may have been a child when you first came to us; I am not a child now. I may not have known my own heart, but I learnt to know it before this sorrow came upon me. You say well that I did not appreciate your brother. It tortures me to hear it, but it was a fact. I was too young, too unformed when I married to realize his worth. You can rate me for the past; I acknowledge with shame that you have good reason to do so; but you shall not address me now as if my husband’s heart were not mine. Your love towards Duncan may be strong; I say that mine is stronger. My absent husband is ever present in my thoughts. I will not take his death for granted. Do you think that separation breaks the tie between us? Death cannot touch true love. He is nearer and dearer to me every day that I live. Absence makes no difference. My heart may ache with longing to hear his voice, to feel his touch, to meet his steadfast gaze, but my soul is wed to his throughout eternity, and it is sacrilege to talk to me of others filling his place.”

Marjorie gazed at her young sister-in-law in amazement.

“You are the most wonderful and contrary of human creatures,” she said breathlessly.

“My husband and I,” continued Una, with heaving breast, “parted as lovers. We shall meet as lovers when we are brought together once more. And if we do not meet this side of the grave, his memory will be the sweetest thing in life. It will carry me through all sorrows and difficulties; it will sustain me in the bitterest moments of pain or affliction; and it will satisfy that part of my soul that craves for human love!”

“This is a soul’s awakening in truth!” exclaimed Marjorie. “You were over-cold before, my child; you are over-warm at present, I protest!”

Una shook her head. She had, as she felt, delivered her soul, and now sank back in her seat in silence.

Marjorie looked her up and down as she might some rare curiosity; then she said—

“We will not talk about my poor brother any more. I—I want to make a confession to you, Una; and I feel if I do not do it to-night, I never shall.”

“What is it?”

Una’s tone lacked interest.

“I have been curious about this unknown lifeboat for a long while. I could not believe with the fishers that it was of the devil’s contrivance. Your long unexplained absence puzzled me; your anxiety to be out on a stormy night; your apparent indifference to what was causing such an excitement around us—all this made me ponder. And then I looked back to my visit to the Witches’ Hole, and I am convinced that we were frightened away from there for some

purpose. I am good at piecing a puzzle together, as I told you long ago. Those Tanners and you know the secret, do you not? Now, can you deny it?"

Una's colour paled and flushed alternately. She said nothing.

Marjorie continued—

"Captain Berry's little boy enlightened me when he told us your eyes were like the sailor's who held him in the lifeboat. I questioned him closely afterwards, and—you must forgive me, for it is a woman's privilege to be curious—I went and examined your oilskins. I found them soaking with salt spray, and in one pocket was a little blue silk handkerchief. The boy claimed it as his; he dropped it in the boat, he said."

There was another pause. Una sat shading her eyes with her hand. Not a word did she say.

"I know you are vexed, my dear. You think I have behaved dishonourably; but you might have confided in me. It angered me to see you following your own plans and purposes with such independence and secrecy; and I was so angry that I did a thing that has made me sorry ever since. I was chattering to one of the old men on the beach, and I told him what I thought."

"What did you tell him?"

Una's eyes were raised now, and their steady penetrating gaze disconcerted Marjorie.

"I told you I was going to make a confession, so you must be gentle with me. I did not say much,

for I was frightened to see how he took it up. It was that man you call Martin. He was dilating on the mystery, and I said, "I think Mrs. Gregson can enlighten you. Why do you not ask her?" He turned upon me fiercely—

"‘Then by ——’ —well, I cannot repeat his expression— ‘them cursed Tanners be in it too! Us have had our doubts, but us will stop their games before long, if us swing for it!’ He quite frightened me, and I have felt unhappy ever since."

"When was this?" asked Una, trying to speak calmly.

"Oh, it was about a week before Cuthbert left us."

"Then," cried Una fiercely, "you are the cause of all our trouble. There has been foul play; and Tom is right, and Patty, too."

"Oh, Una, forgive me! I did not mean any harm. What do you mean by foul play? The *Flying Gull* was wrecked."

"It was tampered with before it left us. Oh, Marjorie, why were you not open with me? Why did you not tell your suspicions instead of taking them to the fishers?"

"Why did *you* not confide in me? Now tell me all about it. I am going away from these parts. I shall be a visitor at the Towers no longer. If you had taken me into your confidence, I should not have betrayed you. I can keep a secret."

"No," said Una resolutely; "I will tell you nothing. Your conjectures have worked us enough harm

already. I little thought you could do us such a mischief. You must think what you like; I shall not enlighten you. Only if you have stirred up the passions and rage of our Perrancove fishers, there is worse to come."

Marjorie dissolved into tears.

"You are cruel to me on my bridal eve. You have no heart, no feeling. I need not have told you anything. Oh, Una, for Cuthbert's sake do not be so angry with me!"

But Una paced the room, and her passionate thoughts were hard to control. She could forgive Marjorie her curiosity, but not her confidences to the fishers. She realized now their desire to wreak their vengeance on Jim and her husband.

"Leave me," she said with flashing eyes; "I am angry with you, and I have a right to be so."

Marjorie crept away, frightened at the tempest of wrath she had awakened in her sunny-tempered little sister-in-law. But half an hour later Una came to her with tears in her eyes.

"I forgive you, Marjorie. I must, for I am trying to be good. God has forgiven me for worse sins than yours. But oh, you little know the mischief you have done! And I have heavy forebodings of evil still to come."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PLOT

“They reckon no laws, that meditate revenge.”—*T. Kyd*.

Marjorie's wedding was over. Una went back to the Towers feeling very lonely. Her father was no companion to her; and now he began riding to the nearest town, and sometimes staying away for days at a time.

Then suddenly a terrific gale swept the coast; the fishing boats came into the harbour hurriedly; and the fishers, lounging about the wharf and drinking heavily, held consultation together with sinister looks and words.

Una and Kathie sped off to Eagle's Head one afternoon. They found Eli and Tom looking to the gear of the *Triumph*, but Tom's face was grave and anxious.

“If this be wanted, us'll be an oar short,” he said sadly.

Kathie gave a little shiver.

“An' I could pull wi' double the will, when I saw my Jim's broad shoulders in front of me. I mind the looks o' his back curls, and the tan brown o' his dear neck, that I did at times bend for'rd an' touch soft wi' my lips as I pulled.”

Eli looked up, and a fire seemed to kindle in his honest eyes.

“If so be, lad, that us were four oars short, out the *Triumph* should go, an’ *two* strong old arms wi’ the help of God should take her.”

“Ay, gran’feyther, us will do our dooty, short though us be.”

“Of course we will,” put in Una heartily; “but we will hope that the *Triumph* will not be wanted. It isn’t every storm that wrecks vessels passing by.”

Eli shook his head.

“’Tis these cruel rocks, an’ the strong current, that drives ’em on to ’em. ’Tis a miracle any craft keepin’ close to the coast escapes.”

They were talking on, when suddenly a shrill voice close to them startled them.

“Ay, masters, look ye well to your treasure! There be many leagued now on the side agen she, an’ if so be ye can master the waves, ye will na be masters o’ they.”

It was Patty standing on the shingle and peering into the cave with her little sharp, cunning eyes. For a moment the owners of the *Triumph* looked at each other in consternation.

Who could silence Patty?

Then Tom strode forward, laid his hand gently but firmly on her arm and drew her in.

Una and Kathie instinctively shrank out of sight; but Patty laughed shrilly as she held up her skinny fingers.

“Ay, Missy, ye be reckoned on my right han’ along wi’ the lad’s widder; ’twas just five on ye, an’ the thumb be taken, an’ now the fingers be goin’ to be crippled; an’ the han’ which grippeth the *Triumph* wull be hangin’ helpless, an the ocean will laugh an’ sing—

“Oh, ho! I will dash an’ drive!
No use for the craft to strive!
For hardworkin’ fishers, young an’ old,
Be waiting’ for bodies, cargo, an’ gold.
An’ evil will come on them that try
To save the souls app’inted to die!”

“Hist!” said Tom sternly, putting his hand over her mouth. “You will not make us afeered, Patty; an’ if so be that ye hindereth our plans or bringeth evil on us by yer tongue, ye’ll rue the day ye did it, for Missy be yer only friend, an’ ye know it too well.”

Patty did know it. Many a time had Una rescued her from teasing, mischievous boys; many a meal had she given to the poor homeless creature; and the old woman had sense enough to realise the truth of Tom’s words.

She changed her tone and began to whine.

“Ay, Missy dear, the old witch wouldn’t harm ye. Her be but a half-crazed crittur, but her do be terrible fond o’ frightenin’ folks, an’ her do know a wonnerful lot o’ what be goin’ on.”

Una came forward.

“Well, Patty, you must be good to us, and keep our secret.”

“Ay, ay,” said the old woman, chuckling and nodding her head. “Silence be my mistress—her allays has bin.”

“How did ye come here?” asked Tom.

But Patty would make no reply; not a word more would she utter. Coaxing, threatening—all proved useless; she shook her head with her finger on her lips. Una suggested that she must have scrambled down the cliff, for there was no sign of a boat outside, and in such a storm she could not have rowed herself over.

They were puzzled to know what to do with her, for they were anxious to guard their way of exit; Una and Kathie were obliged to return home; it was becoming late. At last Tom solved the difficulty by taking her into a dark corner at the furthest end of the cave, and there keeping watch over her till Una and Kathie had climbed up the rope ladder and were safe on the cliffs overhead.

Eli and Tom intended to remain in the cave all night. They would signal to Kathie as usual if they needed her help; and she in her turn would signal to Una.

“I wonder what they will do with Patty?” said Una, as the girls sped swiftly along the cliffs together. “I always felt she knew about us—and what dreadful things she says! I wonder if she really can foresee events? She is always prophesying evil, and sometimes it comes true.”

Kathie was silent. Her thoughts went back to her

wedding day, and again to the time when the *Flying Gull* started for Plymouth. Patty's words had not been favourable either time. She shivered as she thought of them; and then bravely she tried to put them from her.

"Feyther will manage somehow, Missy! I hope he an' gran'feyther will go home to their tea, for they have nothin' down there."

"I heard them say that they would do that. Now we part company. Good night, Kathie, but perhaps we shall meet again."

As they parted, a dark shadow that had been haunting their steps crept aside to some bushes and disappeared.

The last two sentences would have remained unuttered had the girls known a listener was greedily taking them in and storing them up for future use.

It was about eight o'clock that evening when Una saw the signal light from Kathie's cottage. She had come up to her room some time previously, but her father was still lingering over his wine in the dining-room. It did not take her long to get ready, but she was delayed on the doorstep by Baldwin.

"There be terrible trouble in the village, mistress," the old man said. "Mrs Jonas Pengaff came up an' be carryin' on shockin' wi' the maids. Her man an' two others be still out to sea. Her be nearly daft wi' fear."

"I will see her," Una said impulsively, throwing off her oilskins. "Tell her to come to me here."

She knew that trouble always drew the fishers to the Towers. They had an idea that if any help was to be had, that was the only place from whence it could be obtained.

Baldwin went in search of the poor woman, but came back with the news that she had left. He helped his young mistress into her oilskin coat in silence, then, as she was dashing out, stopped her.

“Pardon me, mistress, for speakin’. Be ye goin’ down to the beach? ’Tis too rough for ye!”

“Baldwin, you know I always go out if there is a storm.”

Una’s tone was impatient. She felt she had been already delayed unnecessarily. Every moment was precious. But Baldwin stepped in front of her.

“Pardon me,” he repeated in a quavering voice; “but a body have hinted ‘twas best for your safety ye did not venture out to-night.”

“What do you mean? Who hinted such a thing?”

Una spoke sharply. Baldwin looked mysterious.

“Ay, mistress, there be ways an’ talks in Perrancove now-a-days which a never used to be! An’ the drink, an’ that there scrimmage us had a small time back’erds have much to answer for. Will ye take an old man’s counsel an’ keep indoors to-night?”

Una tossed her head indignantly.

“I am not likely to be kept in by fear, Baldwin, or by silly idle tales you get from gossiping with the villagers. Who would dare to lay their fingers on me, I should like to know?”

She stepped out haughtily, and Baldwin looked after her with sore misgivings. He closed the heavy oak door and sank on a wooden chair in the square hall, covering his face with his hands.

“Her be such a sperrited young creature. Not all the trouble her have passed through have taken that from her. An’ there be none left to guard an’ guide her steps. I be but a useless bit o’ lumber, her feyther be drinkin’ himself silly, an the lads they be off down the beach wi’ all the others. Now may God Almighty protec’ her, for there be nought else to look to!”

Mrs. Craven found him there some minutes after. Her good-tempered, homely face looked anxious and ill at ease.

“Be the young mistress gone out, Baldwin?”

“Ay,” groaned the old man; “her be, an’ nought that I could say would prevent her.”

“She be so determined,” Mrs. Craven said dejectedly; “that I felt ’twould be of little us to stay her. I be very anxious about these tales. Sal Trepann have told me in an awed whisper that she heerd tell that Mistress Marjorie herself had telled old Martin as our young mistress knoweth all about that strange rescue boat. An’ Martin, an’ Nat, and half a dozen others have sworned that the bewitched boat shall not go out agen. The master did enrage ’em terrible when that smart Captain Berry were here. An’ Sally did say she heerd somethin’ to our young mistress’s disadvantage. ’Twas as if they were goin’ to do somethin’ to her hurt!”

Baldwin tottered to his feet.

“I will into my coat an’ track her steps. If evil did befall her I should never forgive myself. ’Tis true us have her strictest orders ne’er to follow her, but her be in danger to-night, an’ that will pardon my interference.”

“Ay! would that I could come wi’ ye. Haste ye, man, an’ if so be as her be not on the beach, why, step up, an’ across the cliffs, for her be fond o’ wanderin’ in that direction.”

“If my legs be carryin’ me so far. But I mis-doubt it.”

When Baldwin staggered out into the wild storm, the violence of the wind nearly carried him off his feet. He made but slow progress; and when he came to the steep incline down to the beach, he paused to consider.

“If so be I go down, I shall not have the strength to come up agen on such a night as this. I had best go along the cliffs. The wind be terrible high there but her may be overlookin’ the coast, an’ I can but venture.”

The night was not a very dark one, for the wind was hurling the black clouds along with such rapidity that every few minutes the silver moon would show her placid face. She seemed the only thing in nature that kept her serenity, and smiled calmly down on the roaring waves and shrieking wind as they ravaged all that lay in their path.

Baldwin stumbled blindly on; his faithful old

heart was with his young mistress, and he determined, if possible, to find her.

Once he fancied he saw a figure moving in the distance. He called, but there was no answer. He was at last compelled to stop. Breathless and exhausted, his feet refused to carry him further, and he was about to retrace his steps when he distinctly heard a muffled call for help. It incited him to fresh effort; he pulled himself together, and made his way to some furze bushes, from whence he fancied it came.

And there, a moment after, lying face downwards with a thick cloth tied around her throat and mouth, and arms pinioned across her breast, was his young mistress!

Baldwin shook with fright when he discovered her.

Who had dared to offer this insult to the lady of the Towers? What fiend had planned and carried into execution such an audacious outrage?

With trembling fingers he released her, and was relieved beyond measure when she sat up and spoke.

“Baldwin, is it you? Oh, thank God! How I have prayed that some one should come to my aid! Help me up. Why, poor old man, you are quite worn out!”

He was, indeed; and half an hour later Mrs. Craven opened the door to a strange sight. Her young mistress, with dishevelled hair and scratched

and bleeding face, almost supporting in her arms her faithful old servant, who seemed to be in the worse plight of the two.

“Get him to bed, Mrs. Craven, and give him something hot to drink. Are there any men in the house? I must go out again, and I need their help. There has been wicked work this evening, and there is not a moment to lose.”

At this Mrs. Craven began to sob aloud.

“Oh, mistress dear, you must not; nay, I cannot let you go! Oh, if only the master were here! If only there were a man who knew how to act! Come to bed yourself, mistress dear. If there be evil going on, are ye the one to be in the midst of it?”

Baldwin struggled to recover himself.

“Her be well-nigh murdered when I found her,” he said with a wailing cry.

Mrs. Craven wrung her hands together in anguish of spirit. She and Baldwin looked such frail old creatures that Una softened her voice in pity.

“Never mind me; I am quite safe; it is others whose lives are in danger. I am going to my room for a few minutes. Find out who is in the house, and send them to me, Mrs. Craven. Take comfort; I shall do nothing rash.”

She stepped up the stairs with such determination in look and tone that Mrs. Craven knew further resistance was useless. She gathered together the groom, stable-boy, and under-gardener, and then went

up to Una's room. She found her bathing her face in warm water, and tying a handkerchief round an ugly cut in her forehead.

"Have you got any one?" she said quickly. "That is right. Give me that woollen hood of mine; thank you. I will tell you about it by and by, but there's not much to tell. I was set upon by some one as I crossed the cliffs; he was not a highwayman, though he posed as such and wore a mask; but he smelt of fish. Don't look so frightened! I am quite safe now, but I am going to Eagle's Head. Has my father gone to bed? Do not disturb him. I hope we shall not be away long."

Poor Mrs. Craven was beyond speech. Una gave her a little reassuring nod, then ran down the stairs and met the three men on the doorstep. Dick Robson, the under-gardener, was a sturdy Cornish man, with broad shoulders and much length of limb. He was proud to serve his young mistress, and brandished his cudgel as if he were longing to test its strength. John Snelling, the groom, though small in stature, was by nature well fitted for a contest. The muscles of his arms stood out like whipcord; he was a renowned boxer, and had nearly lost his place by continual boxing fights in the stable yard. And lastly, Ned Craven, a nephew of the good old housekeeper, was a daring, mischievous spirit, who delighted in anything and everything except his work.

Una looked at them with satisfaction.

“I hope we shall not want blows,” she said. “I fear we shall be too late to prevent what I dread. Now step quickly and quietly after me, and ask no questions, only do as you are told.”

She led them across the cliffs towards the Tanner’s cottage—it was on the edge of a sharp cutting in the cliff. The door was open, but there was darkness within. Una had a lantern which she had not lighted, but which now with the application of a match showed the interior of a small kitchen. Not a thing was disturbed or out of place. A meal was laid on a round deal table, but Una noticed that the food was only half-eaten, and a woollen comforter that Eli always wore was on the table by his cup and plate.

“They were interrupted,” she said half-aloud. Then turning to Ned, she added—

“Now, Ned, stay here. We shall not be far off, and if you want our help use this whistle. Do not let any one enter the cottage until we return.”

She gave the boy a whistle which she detached from a chain she always wore, then signed to the two other men to follow her.

Ned looked after their retreating figures with great discontent.

“’Tis plain I be not meant to join in the fray to-night,” he grumbled.

Then taking a chair, he drew it up to the smouldering wood fire, and with the bellows commenced to expend his energy in vigorous blowing. When the flames were dancing up merrily he turned his

attention to the table, and cutting himself a good hunk of bread and cheese, seated himself again in his chair.

“I were brought out wi’out my supper, so will take it here,” he reflected.

A hearty meal and the warm fire combined soon had the effect of making him drowsy. In a little while he slept heavily.

CHAPTER XIX.

DARK DEEDS

“Man’s inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.”

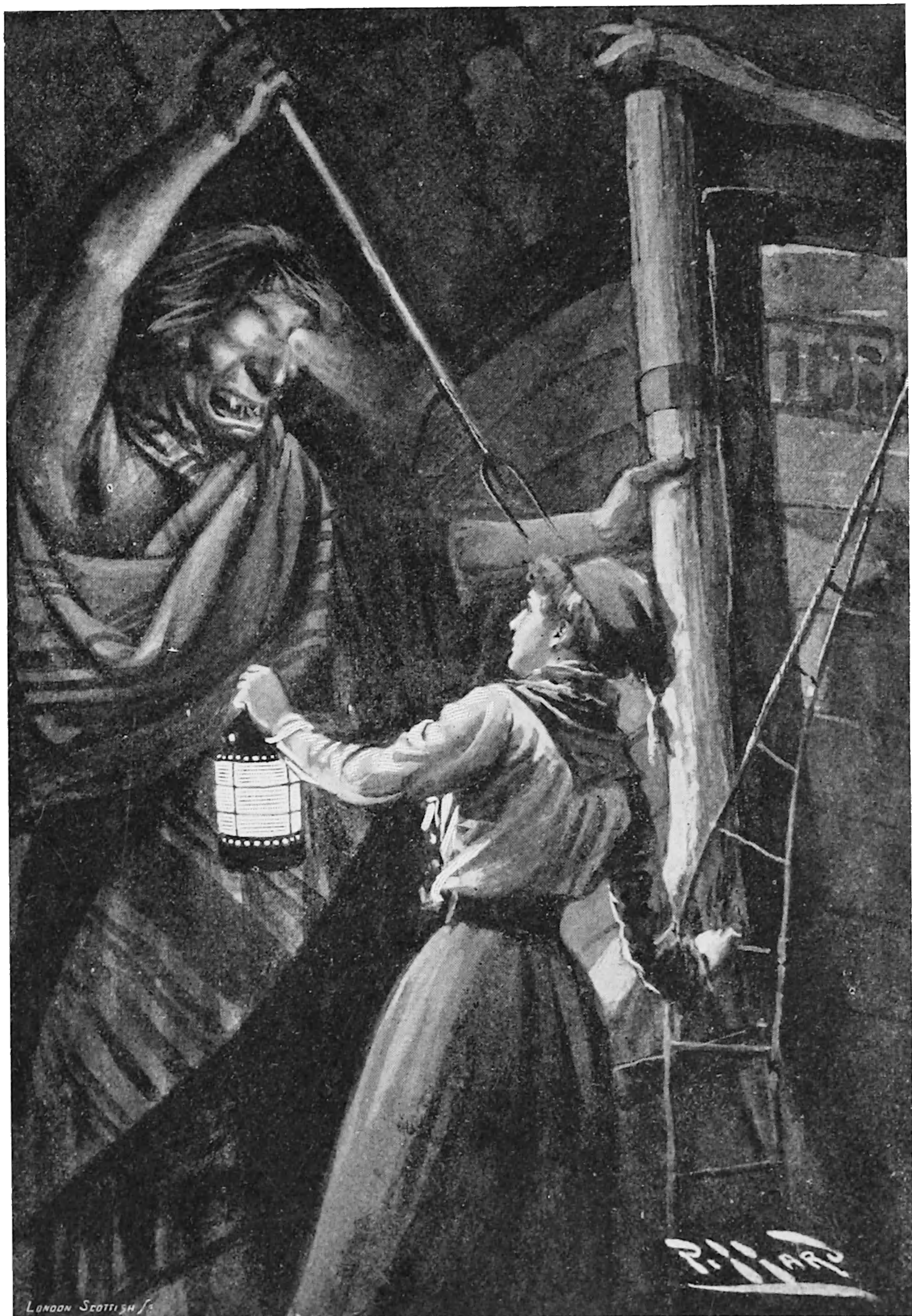
Burns.

Una led her two men down the steps that led to the Tanner’s landing-place. Half-way down she stopped. Dick looked up questioningly.

“What be us to find here?” he said.

“I hope you will find nothing,” she said, with a quick-drawn breath; “but I know an hour or two ago you would have found some one. Search well; if Ned whistles to you, go to his aid. I shall be back shortly.”

It was only a hundred yards away to the gorse bushes that covered the secret descent to the Witches’ Hole. Una paused for one moment at the top, and listened. Not a sound was to be heard. Swiftly and quietly she descended, and paused when she reached the bottom before she dared light her lantern. Only the lashing waves and wind outside met her anxious ear. Very cautiously she struck a match, and heaved a sigh of relief when she saw the *Triumph* standing untouched; but the next moment she started back in horror, for standing as if in guard over the boat, was an awful-looking creature. Two eyes of blue fire



TWO EYES OF BLUE FIRE STARED STEADILY AT HER.

stared steadily at her; she swung her lantern round until the full blaze of its light fell upon the object. And then with another long-drawn breath of relief she saw it was one of Tom's ingenious ruses for keeping away the superstitious fishers from the *Triumph*. It was a stuffed figure, nearly seven foot high, with a ghastly white face, and a broad-painted grin; phosphorus had been applied to its eyes and different parts of its body. One arm was raised in threatening attitude with a rust pitchfork in its grip; the other was laid on the *Triumph's* rudder. As she looked she felt that it would need a very daring spirit to enter into the Witches' Hole with such an object as that in front of them. She made a hasty search through the cavern. The *Triumph* was untouched, but where were her crew? She retraced her steps **up** the rope ladder with a sinking heart.

When she had left the Towers two or three hours previously, she had run across the cliffs without a fear in her heart. She had nearly reached her goal, when suddenly some dark cloak was flung over her head from behind, and she was tripped up. She fell heavily against a sharp rock, and was for the time stunned by the fall. When she was recovering consciousness, she heard voices, but could see no one.

"Leave her be. Us doth not want her hurt. 'Tis only to keep her disabled."

"Her hands be fast tied; us had best put her out o' the path in among the bushes, for folks might pass; an' us have a good hour's work afore us."

“Them skulkin’ varmint! A will tackle Tom, for the old ’un be easily done for. ’Tis the last time they do keep our rightfu’ spoil from us!”

“Ay, but them do be in the league wi’ the devil himself, the folks say.”

“Us will see if so be that strange craft do go out to-night when us have got ’em in our hands; an’ if she be not seen, us will know they have raised her by their wicked spells!”

“Ay, an’ if ’tis so, us will burn ’em out of Perrancove!”

“Come on, man, Missy be safe enough. If us cannot catch ’em at their house, they’ll be in Eagle Head Cove. A’ll go there myself!”

Una was dragged along the turf, pushed amongst the gorse; and she heard her assailants move off, muttering threats of vengeance on the poor Tanners as they went. She struggled to release her hands in vain. Her own woolen scarf was tied across her mouth, and all she could do was to roll herself over and over on the ground towards the beaten path, in the hope of receiving help from some passer-by.

It was not long before Baldwin found her, and she had been prompt and quick in action, yet here, on the scene of the plotted outrage, there was no sight or sign of the Tanners or their persecutors. Had they been murdered? she wondered. Had they been dashed over the cliff-side? She felt convinced that Tom would not be secured without a

desperate struggle. And then, where was Kathie? She reached the top of the cliff and went back to the cottage at Eagle's Head, fearing to hear what her men might have found. As she reached the door Ned rushed out excitedly.

"Oh, mistress, 'tis bewitched! This place be bewitched!"

"Do not be so foolish," Una said sharply. "Have you seen or heard anything?"

"Oh, there be frightful groans all round me, an' ne'er a living soul to be seen!"

Ned had only just awoke from his slumber, and his senses were not very bright. Una went in at once and heard the groans that had frightened him, but they seemed to come from under the floor. She remembered there was a trap door, and soon found the ring of it. Getting Ned to help her, they lifted it up. There was a small cellar underneath, and at the foot of the short ladder descending, was what appeared to Una a bundle of clothes. Ned's courage was returning; he volunteered to go down; but telling him to hold the lantern, Una went down herself.

It was poor old Eli. He had been served more roughly than had Una, and was now quite unconscious. With great difficulty Una and Ned carried him up and laid him on his bed. Una's blood boiled with indignation as she saw his bruises and wounds, and realised the cowardly attack made upon such a helpless old man.

She set to work at once, with the deftness and skill

of a born nurse. She had always been accustomed to doctor wounded animals, and that experience now helped her. She had thoroughly provided herself with soft rag and ointment, for she knew if she found her friends alive, they would be sorely hurt. She bathed and bound up his cuts and bruises, got him to swallow some brandy, and soon had the pleasure of seeing him open his eyes and recognize her.

“Ah, Missy,” he murmured, “I be most done for, I fears!”

“No, indeed, you are not, Eli. You are going to get quite well,” she said brightly, trying to hide the tears that sprang to her eyes. “And you have no bones broken.”

“I feel broken entirely.”

“You mustn’t talk. I am going to leave Ned with you till I fetch Kathie.”

“Where be Tom?” the old man groaned. “They set on us, Missy, outside the door here. ’Twas inky black; I—I lost Tom. I remembereth no more!”

“We are going to find Tom. Don’t talk, but try to sleep.”

Una told Ned to watch by him, and moved towards the door; but as she did so it opened, and Dick and John came in carrying a sad burden.

“He be dead, mistress,” said Dick, with a lugubrious shake of his head. “He must a’ bin’ flung down the face o’ the cliff, for us found ’im at the bottom. Nobody could a-live after that—no ways!”

Una's courage nearly failed her. She had to make a supreme effort to prevent the feminine weakness of tears from overcoming her.

But she conquered it, and desired her men to lay poor Tom on his little wooden bed. She bent over him, and though his heart seemed to have stopped beating, she did not fancy that his face bore the impress of death upon it.

"Dick," she said promptly, "run for the doctor—run for your life, and perhaps we shall save him yet!"

Dick disappeared, and Una tried her utmost to restore life to the inanimate form. She saw at a glance that one of his legs was broken, and that his head had received severe injury. She bathed that as well as she could, put hot bottles to his cold feet, and got a little drop of brandy down his throat. Then she sat and waited. It seemed hours before the doctor arrived, but he came at last.

He asked no questions, to Una's great relief, but set to work at once, and at last a low moan rewarded his efforts.

I shall bring him round, but he'll want good nursing. Is there no woman belonging to him?"

"I will go and fetch her," said Una, "if you can do without me."

The doctor nodded. He was a brisk little man of middle age, and lived about four miles away. He was not very cognizant of all that went on at Perran-cove, for he had a large practice over a very scattered population, and was always very busy.

“Your place seems in a tumult to-night,” he remarked. “I fear a largish vessel has been wrecked on those Perran Rocks.”

“Yes,” said Una quietly, though her heart was full of bitterness; “I am afraid lives have suffered to-night. Will you look at the old man too, and do what you can for him?”

“Another—has it been a bit of a spree, or a fight, or what?”

Una could not reply. She left the house with a choking sob. The night air fanned her heated temples, and she lifted her face to the sky above. “O God,” she cried, “have mercy on them, and save them from such a cruel death? And let me find Kathie alive and well. Oh, watch over and keep us!”

The storm was abating slightly. A faint streak of light on the horizon showed that the night was over and that dawn was already breaking. As Una went down the village street there were lights and voices in more than one house, and men were still hovering about the beach. Before she turned the corner to Kathie’s cottage she came face to face with a little group. Two women crying pitifully walked by the side of a hurdle. It was the drowned body of Jonas Pengaff. His mother and wife had been on the beach when the body was washed ashore. Even Una’s present trouble could not deaden her to the grief of others.

She stopped and addressed the wife—

“Oh, Mary, is there no hope! You poor dear creature! I was out when you came up. Oh, I am sorry for you!”

One of the lads bearing the sad burden looked up.

“Ay, Missy, it have bin a terrible night. Jonas b’ain’t the only one. There be Tom McCake missin’, an’ Jake West’s corpse have just bin washed up. They must a fallen in wi’ this brig that be wrecked an’ boarded her, for they come in alongside o’ t’other corpses, an’ pieces o’ their smack be floatin’ close to t’other. Ay, it have bin a dreadful storm.”

Una continued her way. When she got to Kathie’s cottage she saw a light in the window. A man leaning against the wall slouched off as she stepped up to the door. She found it locked, and knocked loudly.

“Are you there, Kathie?”

It was an intense relief when Kathie replied from within—

“Is it you, Missy? Thank God. Any one beside you? Whisper through the keyhole.”

Una obeyed.

“I am alone,” she whispered. “Why don’t you unlock the door?”

“I can’t. Some un have locked me in, an’ I cannot break the lock.”

“Cannot you get through the window?”

“Have tried, Missy. They’re too small. Tell me, did the *Triumph* go out?”

“No. Who locked you in, Kathie?”

“I cannot tell. I was puttin’ my things together when I heard a sound. A hand just opened my door an’ snatched at the key like lightenin’! Afore I could get to it, I found myself a prisoner!”

Then I shall rouse up every house in the village till they give me the key,” said Una, her spirit rising in indignant protest at this treatment. “If they think they are going to have it all their own way, they’re mistaken, the cowardly brutes!”

She was so angry that she raised her voice. Turning back, she was going to make good her words, when there was a rattle on the stones by her feet. Stooping down, she picked up the key; it had evidently been flung to her by some one within hearing. For an instant she meditated pursuing a moving shadow a short way off; then she thought better of it, and taking the key, she soon had the door opened, and in another moment she and Kathie were crying in each other’s arms.

It only needed a few words of explanation, and Kathie was hastily packing a basket with requisite articles for nursing, bravely checking her sobs, and only too anxious to be up and doing after her long time of enforced idleness.

“I couldn’t go to bed, Missy; I felt that evil were brewin’. I knew if they kep’ me a prisoner they would serve feyther worse; an’ I trembled for you crossin’ the cliffs alone! I’ve heard whispers of this plot. They dursn’t go to Witches’ Hole, but they have had suspicions of the *Triumph’s* crew, an’ were determined to stop us.”

They were walking up the village street now. Kathie had locked the cottage door and put the key in her pocket. Silently they made their way along, but when once on top of the cliffs, Una spoke.

“They have been successful, Kathie. Even now they are getting spoil from the wretched vessel. Isn’t it awful to think of all those souls drowned when we were ready to save them? Oh, it is inhuman! But some of them have been punished for it. We should have saved Jonas Pengaff, Tom McCabe, and Jake West. All three leave widows and families. They have brought it on their own heads. I shall tell them so!”

“Poor, poor things,” said tender-hearted Kathie.

“I feel to-night,” Una went on hotly, “as if I would like to make a clean sweep of the whole population of Perrancove! They are robbers and murderers, and they have tried to murder to-night two innocent men—the only ones who are noble and honest and true! I—I—want revenge, Kathie, and so will you when you see dear old Eli and poor, poor Tom!”

“Ay no, Missy,” said Kathie with a quick-caught breath. “Us be not haythens. What would our Master say?”

“I—I feel wicked to-night,” said Una, with a little sob. “Why does God try us so? He has taken our husbands. He has almost taken Tom and Eli. What can we two lone women do?”

“He has left the Lifeboat,” said Kathie softly.

“Yes, the *Triumph* is safe, but we shall hardly be able to manage her.”

“I did not mean the *Triumph*, Missy. Our own Lifeboat—the dear Lord Himself.”

Una was silent then she laid her hand softly on Kathie’s arm.

“Thank you for reminding me. Yes, we have Him, or rather, He has us. We cannot be wrecked, Kathie, nor more can any of our dear ones. Oh! do let us pray that they may be all given back to us.”

When they reached Eagle’s Head they found that the doctor had finished his work. Tom’s broken leg was set, his head bandaged, and he was lying comfortably in his bed. The doctor came forward gravely as Una entered.

“He is not out of danger, for I fear it is concussion of the brain; but I hope he will pull through. It is a miracle he has survived. Who are the perpetrators of such an outrage? It ought to be put into the hands of the coastguards or police.”

“We do not know who they are,” said Una quietly. “This is his daughter-in-law; she will be able to stay and nurse him if you will give her your directions. How is the old man?”

“Very exhausted and shaken, but he is asleep, and that will do him more good than anything. I will look in to-morrow. I am hoping to save the leg, but I fear amputation.”

Kathie looked up in horror.

“Oh, doctor!” she cried, “do, do save him from that. Feyther be so strong an’ active that his heart will be broken if he be a cripple for life.”

“Well, lass, we will hope for the best.”

Una stayed till he went, and then, leaving Ned behind to help Kathie to nurse, she set off homewards in company with her two men.

Now that she had nothing more to do, her weariness made itself felt. The sun was slowly rising from behind the Towers; a fair sweet summer day was dawning; and the sea alone, with its long line of breakers, bore witness to the raging storm that had so lately ruffled its surface.

It was only her strong will that enabled Una to reach her home unaided. When she met Mrs. Craven, who had been up all night anxiously expecting her return, she tottered into her arms.

“Take me to bed. I feel done for!”

And all that bright summer day she lay in exhausted slumber in her bed. Towards evening she revived, and insisted upon walking out to Eagle’s Head. Mrs. Craven begged her to let the groom accompany her. She was terrified, poor soul, for her mistress’s safety, and was intensely relieved when Una agreed to do as she wished.

Tom was still unconscious and very ill. Eli was much better, but content to lie in bed and rest. Una sat with them whilst Kathie went home for a little. Eli was able to give her a more coherent account

of what had happened, and she listened with the greatest interest.

“ ’Twere like this, Missy. After you be gone, Tom an’ I were talkin’ serious as to what to do wi’ Patty, an’ for a minute us took our eyes off her. All of a sudden her sprang like a cat to our ladder, that her must have knowed about before, an’ like a lightenin’ streak her were up an’ away. Tom he runneth after her, but not a sign did he see of her when he gotten up. Then he cometh back, an’ us talketh over matters serious like. An’ he riggeth up a terrible figure; for he saith ’tis only fear will keep the fishers away now. They do be terrible concerned to find out about we! An’ if they once did see the *Triumph*, her would be hacked to pieces in no time! So as time were gettin’ on, us left an’ went home to tea. Us had not satten long, afore Tom, who was in an’ out, a-watchin’ the coast, cried out, ‘Feyther, there be a brig a-drivin’ right on the Perran Rocks! A’ll hoist the signal to Kathie, an’ us must be off to wance!’ He runneth out, an’ were just a comin’ in, when his lantern be dashed to ground, an’ six or eight men be on him. Tom, he struck out right an’ left bravely; but there were too many. I be an old man, Missy, but my blood were up; an’ I asketh my Father to lend me strength, an’ I seizeth my stick an’ I rusheth out into the middle of ’um! ’Twere so uncommon dark, that I couldn’t see the faces on ’em, but I gotted a crack on my head, an’ I knoweth

no more, till I found you an' your lad a bendin' over me!"

"I can guess the rest," said Una, and she would not let him talk any more, for he was becoming restless and excited.

CHAPTER XX.

THE NEW RECTOR

“Noble he was, contemning all things mean,
His truth unquestioned, and his soul serene;
Shame knew him not, he dreaded no disgrace;
Truth, simple truth, was written in his face.”

Crabbe.

It was many days before Perrancove quieted down. The loss of three of their number sobered some, but others were drinking heavily. The wrecked vessel proved to be a merchant's, and, as far as they could judge not a soul had been saved. Bales and casks continued to be washed ashore, amidst much secret rejoicing. The assault on the Tanners was hushed up. None of their assailants could be identified, and the bulk of Perrancove were in sympathy with them. As Una said hopelessly, when talking it over with her housekeeper—

“Kathie and I are two helpless women, Mrs. Craven. Our husbands are supposed to be dead; and though we do not believe they are, others do; and we have no men to defend us. I know you say that I can rely upon my household; but I am not so sure that I can. Where do the maids get their bright silks from? I have been talking to one of them this morning. She held a most exquisite gold-wrought

chain in her hands. With sobs she confessed that Dick had given it to her last night. Now where did Dick get it?"

Mrs. Craven looked uncomfortable.

"They be but lads, mistress; they see no harm in pickin' up what be cast at their feet—so to speak. They were out on the beach last night. Maybe the chain were tossin' in an' out with the seaweed."

Una shook her head. She doubted whether Mrs. Craven would resist a piece of rare lace for her caps, if offered to her. She went away and cried in the privacy of her room.

"Oh, Cuthbert, why did you leave me? I am too helpless, too inexperienced to guide our household. I want a man's head, a man's stern judgment. I cannot rule them as I ought!"

She was realising now as she had never realised before, her own weakness and incompetence. It brought a softness into her tone, a wistfulness into her eyes, that added to her charms, had she only known it. But if she had, she would have cared little. Vanity was not her besetting sin, and her heart and thoughts were always with her absent husband. The summer passed quietly. Tom recovered, though it was a slow and tedious recovery, and he knew he would never be so active on his feet as formerly. Eli was up and about long before he left his bed. The doctor said their strong and vigorous constitutions were much in their favour. Tom wanted Kathie to let her cottage, and come and live with

them; but though she spent most of her days at Eagle's Head, she steadfastly refused to move.

"My Jim may come back any day," she would say; and not all the pitying looks and doubtful head-shakings of those she talked with could dim the light of hope that shone in her large expressive eyes. One day a change came upon the little fishing village. The old rector, who had been for years past his work, died, and a tall young athletic fellow took his place.

Una was rowing round the coast in her boat when she first met him. She heard a call for help, and beheld on some rocks in a small bay a man brandishing a white handkerchief on a stick.

She rowed up to him, and found he had lost an oar, and got into such a strong current that he had very nearly been dashed to pieces on the rocks.

"Come into my boat," she said, "and we will tow yours along."

He sprang lightly in, and Una looked at him wonderingly. He was like a Saxon giant, she thought; but a very handsome one. His curly head looked as if the sun were always touching it, so bright and sunshiny was it in hue; his blue eyes, fringed with dark lashes, sparkled with animation; every gesture of his long-limbed broad-shouldered figure bespoke healthy energy and activity. He met Una's eyes, as she quietly took note of him, with a radiant smile—a smile that was infectious in its frank joyousness.

"I am a stranger to you," he said in a clear ringing voice. "But I hope I shall not remain so long. May

I take an oar? Thank you. Are you not Mrs. Gregson? I have seen you in the distance."

"Yes, at church. You are our new clergyman. How do you like your parish?"

Una spoke demurely.

"I think I shall delight in it. The fishers are after my own heart; and the sea has a fascination that I cannot resist. You would not think it after my mishap this morning, but I am a born sailor. It was a terrible grief to me when my mother told me she wished me to go into the Church; for as a youngster, I set my heart on being in the Navy. When I rowed out this morning I felt life was almost intoxicating; and then in my rashness I came too near the rocks."

"It was well they were not the Perran rocks."

"Where are they? I have heard dreadful tales of the havoc they cause to vessels out of their course."

"They run in a reef right across our bay; the current is very strong near Condy's Cave, and vessels are driven on to them continually."

"So I hear. I asked an old man to-day if there was no lighthouse to warn passing ships. He scowled at me terribly."

"Yes, he would."

Una's tone was absent. Then she roused herself.

"You will be making acquaintance with them all; but very few of them come to church. Some go over to a chapel at Pollycarthew, the rest go nowhere."

"But if they will not come to me I shall go to them,"

said Donald McFarlane. "I shall hold a service on the beach, or in a boat—anywhere—so long as I am amongst them! I have not come here to be idle. I long for work; I long to tell them the good news I have for them. They seem dark with superstition and ignorance."

Una looked at his glowing face, and her pulses quickened.

"You—you believe in religion!" she asked hesitatingly.

"Believe in my vocation? I should think I do? I could not be a messenger if I did not believe in my Master or in His message that I am to bring!"

"Ah," said Una impulsively, "you are the man we have been wanting. Kathie and I often say that if we were not women we should try and speak to them. We are a wicked lot, Mr. McFarlane; we don't like to be interfered with, and the less we know, the less we want to know. There have been one or two saints amongst us. Kathie and I have been taught all we know from them, and we struggle on together. We sadly want a messenger, a true real minister, one who will move in and out amongst us, and be a friend to all."

Donald McFarlane looked up into the blue sky fervently; then straight into Una's wistful eyes.

"God helping me I will be that to *you*, and others," he said.

A little silence fell on them both. Then he began asking questions about the neighbourhood, and

Una found herself telling him fully the history of Perrancove and of its inhabitants. She was silent regarding her own loss and the existence of the *Triumph*. As they rowed along in the sunshine her heart warmed towards this new-comer. He looked so good, so strong so true. She felt as if some one had been sent to her in her hour of need—one in whom she could confide; who would stand by and help her; who would be a tower of strength to the weak and helpless.

His sunshiny brightness infected her. She threw off her cares, and her ringing laugh joined his hearty one as their oars flashed in and out and they chatted on together.

They parted the best of friends. Donald had heard about the young mistress of the towers. He had felt a great pity for the young girl in such an isolated position, and now he had made her acquaintance that pity turned into a deep interest. Her girlish vivacity, her keen sense of the ludicrous, her warmth of feeling—all found response in his own heart.

“A widow, without believing in her widowhood,” he soliloquised as he walked back to the rectory that morning. “What a child she is! How apparently untouched by her bereavement! I wonder if she really cared for him? There is a sad little look in her eyes when she is grave, but how her face lights up as she talks! How impulsive, how pretty, how bewitching she is! And how earnest in the real deep things of life! Oh, I am glad, I am thankful, I came

to this part of the world. I may be able to be a help and a comfort to her.

Poor Donald! Honest and open as the day itself, he little knew the strong current that was already lapping round his barque—the current that with such a sunshiny surface was going to carry him slowly and surely into dangerous waters that would well-nigh overwhelm his soul.

Una never forgot his first sermon, delivered the following Sunday. He had taken the service the week previously, but had not preached. Now his voice rang out through the building with no uncertain bound.”

“The Lord hath annointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

A good many fishers attended out of curiosity to hear the “new parson,” but they did not expect to be so riveted and held by his words.

Donald had a very simple and clear mode of delivery. He went straight to his point and kept to it, hitting hard and truly, but with such love and yearning in his tone that it was impossible for his hearers to take offence. He divided his text into three parts, dealing with the three different classes mentioned. Very tender and deeply sympathetic was he in his words to the broken-hearted. Una and Kathie were in tears, as were many others with

aching hearts and desolate lives. His picture of prison-bound captives—prisoners bound with cords of self-seeking, drink and sin—was graphic in its power and intensity.

“Even in this sweet fishing village,” he said, “with God’s fatherly love showing itself in the golden sunshine and blue rippling waves, with His power in the huge Atlantic billows when the wind rises, and the storms come upon us—even here, there are souls that are hugging their chains, that are shutting their eyes to what is right and pure and good. They are plotting evil, and clogging their brains with drink. They are bound by the devil himself, and can only think and act in his service. Slaves of sin! slaves of drink! slaves of greed! You who revel in your fellow man’s destruction! you, who with the treacherous rocks across your bay, allure passing vessels to their destruction! are you happy in your bondage? Are you free? I bring you good tidings to-day of One who shall make you free!”

The fishers were spell-bound. Who was this fair-faced, yellowed-haired boy who stood up in their midst and dared to speak to them so?

They came away dumbfounded.

“He knoweth too much o’ these parts, that new chap do,” muttered one to the other.

“But he be a powerfu’ praycher.”

And when he came amongst them with his outstretched hand and hearty laugh they could not resist the radiant young parson. He wound himself round

their hearts, and gained their confidence in a most marvellous and inexplicable manner.

Even the surliest would touch their hats, and respond to his greeting as he passed

One afternoon he met Una outside her own gates.

“I was coming to call upon you about a certain matter,” he said; “but if you are walking anywhere may I accompany you?”

“I was going over to Eagle’s Head,” Una said brightly. “Do come with me. Eli will be delighted to see you.”

He strode along by her side, and a shadow seemed to cross his face as he said gravely—

“Do you know all the superstitions of this part, Mrs. Gregson? I suppose you do. I was amused at first, but it pains one after a bit. I rescued an old woman who, I hear, lives in terror of her life. She is a poor crazed thing, and the lads who were bullying her informed me she was a witch. One went so far as to tell me that she would have been killed long ago if she had not had nine lives like a cat.”

“That is poor old Patty. I often long to give her a cottage, and put some one in to look after her, but she would never stay in it. She loves roaming about at her own free will, and coming upon you when you least expect her. The boys are very cruel to her. I am always speaking to them about it.”

“Then what is this about the Witches’ Hole? I am told that a certain black boat comes out of it whenever a wreck is at hand, and that a certain

family living on that headland over there are in league with this evil one. I have heard conflicting testimonies about it; some say that they save lives, others that they destroy them. My informants wax so hot over their iniquities that they become quite incoherent. The one clear fact I have gathered is that the Witches' Hole is haunted, and that no one dare venture in on peril of their lives. I mean to row myself over this afternoon and penetrate the mystery surrounding it."

"Oh!" said Una, looking startled, "I should not do that if I were you."

"Why not? Surely, Mrs. Gregson, you do not share in this superstition?"

"No, but—but it is dangerous round the Witches' Hole. Condyl's Cave is close to it, and the currents are very strong there; you might get drawn into them."

"Do you ever go there yourself?"

"Sometimes."

Una's tone was hesitating. She added earnestly—

"It is not really haunted. There is no object in your going. You have been listening to idle tales."

"But I cannot convince the fishers that it is not haunted unless I visit it myself. Will you come with me, Mrs. Gregson, and show me the way? You have come to my rescue once, and as you know the currents so well, there would be no danger with you as a pilot."

“Oh, no; I cannot really do that. I beseech you to give it up. I—I ask you, as a personal favour, not to go.”

The colour was coming and going in her cheeks as she spoke. Donald McFarlane noted her agitation, and was filled with wonder.

He met her appealing eyes with a grave, intent look; then he said gently—

“Will you not confide in me, Mrs. Gregson? I assure you that I am to be trusted; and if silence is necessary, that silence will not be broken by me, except by your permission. I will be quite frank with you. Your name has been mentioned in connection with this mystery and in a way that I do not like to hear. Who are the Tanners, and why are they such friends of yours? What have they done to make themselves such objects of hate in the village?”

“I am going to their house now,” said Una evasively. “Wait until you have seen them, and then form your own judgment about them.”

Donald was silent. They soon reached the cottage, and found Eli mending a fishing-net in the wooden porch. He looked up brightly when he saw his visitors.

“Ay, Missy, ’tis good to see ye, and I be honoured by a call from our passon. Sit ye down, sir, ’tis a right proper marnin’ to be out.”

Donald took a seat as desired, after giving the old man one of his hearty hand-grips.

Una settled herself on the sloping grass bank in

front of the cottage, and insisted upon helping Eli in his work.

“You know how I love netting, so let me do some, whilst you talk to Mr. McFarlane. Where is Tom?”

“He be out fishin’, but I looketh for him soon!”

“I want to know all my parishioners,” said Donald pleasantly. “Were you at church last Sunday?”

“Ay, us were that. Them were good words ye spake to us, sir; I cometh back an’ put up a song of thanksgivin’ that the dear Lord have sent a trumpet to us wi’ no oncerting sound. Let Him blow through ye, sir! the toon will reach our hearts, an’ break through many a deaf ear, if it be the Lord Hisself that bloweth!”

Donald’s fair young face flushed and lightened with pleasure. He and Eli plunged into an animated conversation at once, which lasted till Tom returned. Una sat by, saying little. She was wondering if she could trust the young clergyman with their secret; she was convinced that no amount of persuasion or entreaty would deter him from his purpose if he saw it to be a right one; and she felt it might be wiser to tell him about the *Triumph* before he discovered its existence himself.

With Tom, came Kathie, bearing a covered basket in her hand. She dropped a curtesy to her rector, and seemed to him to be the personification of an ideal fisher’s wife.

“ ’Tis just a pie, gran’feyther, that I have bin’ bakin’, and so I thought I’d bring it along. I meeteth wi’ feyther on the way.”

“I wish I could stay to help you eat it, Kathie,” said Una, rising from her seat with a little sigh; “but I must be going. I brought Eli some good strong soup in that jug. Make him drink it before you leave, Kathie; he doesn’t half take care of himself. Don’t let me hurry you, Mr. McFarlane; for you will be able to find your way back alone.”

But Donald rose, and bade the Tanners farewell. He had been having a few words with Tom; and turned to Una radiantly as they walked along together—

“You have given me much enjoyment, Mrs. Gregson. I do not wonder at your friendship with them. The old man reminds me of the old Bible saint from whom he gets his name.”

“You would not wonder if you knew all the ties between us,” said Una gravely. “Eli and Kathie have helped to make religion real to me. They are all as good as they can be.”

“Then what, may I ask, causes their names to be linked with evil doing and witchcraft, and such like?”

Una was silent.

He gave a quick glance at her troubled face.

“I will not vex you with my inquisitiveness. I dare say when I land at the Witches’ Hole this afternoon, I may find a clue to what is puzzling me there.”

“But,” said Una, standing still and facing him, “I have asked you not to go there.”

A little of her old haughtiness was in her tone.

A shadow came across his face. He was beginning already to fear causing her vexation or distress.

“I will postpone my visit if you like,” he said very gently; “but before next Sunday comes and I occupy my pulpit again, I mean to have this superstition and mystery thoroughly investigated, and put upon a right footing.”

A flash of anger shot into Una’s expressive eyes; then it died away.

“I suppose you will do what you think right,” she said, a little stiffly. “I see it is of no use to ask you any favour. I have my reasons for not wishing you to go to the Witches’ Hole to-day. If you will come up to the Towers to-morrow I will give you them.”

“Thank you,” Donald said quietly; “I will come, and postpone my visit till our interview is over. Good morning.”

He lifted his hat, and was gone.

Una walked slowly home, with knitted brows and anxious face.

CHAPTER XXI.

MARTIN'S CONFESSION

“Forgive! For 'tis sweet to stammer one letter
Of the Eternal's language; on earth it is called Forgiveness.”
Longfellow.

At three o'clock the next afternoon Donald made his appearance at the Towers. Una had that morning held a long consultation with the Tanners; they were loth to entrust their secret to any one; but they knew that it would be quite impossible to keep a man of Donald's calibre and disposition in ignorance of it very long. He would not be frightened by Tom's simple ruses for keeping the superstitious fishers at a distance. So with much misgiving, and some little annoyance, Una sat down in the drawing-room in the corner of her favourite window, and signed to him to take a seat opposite her.

“I am going to entrust you with a secret, Mr. McFarlane. You may, from your want of knowledge of these parts, see no need for the mystery we have made; but the experience and knowledge of others, who know better than I do the fatal result of making such a secret public, will perhaps have some weight with you.”

“It will,” assented Donald.

She looked such a child as she sat there, that the dignified tone and words almost made him smile. What was this secret, he wondered, that seemed of such great importance in her eyes? His glance took in every detail of her little figure—her sunny brown hair; her small determined oval face, with its clear rich colouring; her glowing flashing eyes, now down-cast, with the long curling lashes sweeping her cheeks. There was youth and beauty in every outline; there was resolute independence and wistful sadness there too.

“What a young creature,” he thought, “to be in such an isolated position as she is, and the mistress of this place! How much she must need a husband’s love and care!”

But Una was speaking. She lost her little touch of hauteur when she was once in the midst of her story; and as he listened, the young clergyman’s feeling changed from amusement and pity to one of intense interest and admiration.

Una told him all—the months of secret toil at their beloved boat; the dreadful scenes on the beach when wrecks were washed ashore; the lives they had saved; the strife between the neighbouring coastguardsmen and the fishers when her husband had intervened; and the threats of vengeance which ensued. She told of the departure of the *Flying Gull* with quivering lip; the fear they had of treachery; and lastly of the murderous attack on the Tanners and the assault upon herself.

Donald's young blood boiled within him.

"How can such things be allowed?" he exclaimed. "I thought I had come into a parish of peace and beauty; it is only a slumbering volcano! I marvel that you go about amongst them with such kind goodwill and cheeriness. To hear you chatting with them all, one would never think they had been such villains!"

"No," said Una with a smile; "and I try to forget it, until they rouse my ire, and then I speak out! You see I have been brought up in the midst of them. I count myself one of them. I have fished and boated with them all. I have climbed the cliffs to get the seagulls' eggs in company with the lads; I have taken a hand in dragging their nets ashore; I have noted the weather signs with the oldest of them. I love the sea, and they love it. I know every trick of the tide, every bend in the coast; and the only matter on which we differ is this dreadful plundering of wrecks. But lately I acknowledge, since—since Kathie and I have lost our husbands, and since we nearly lost Eli and Tom as well, it has been hard work to be friendly with those who have been the cause of it. I have prayed hard, and so has Kathie, that we might have forgiving spirits. We do not actually know who were the culprits, but we can guess. And now you have heard all about it, Mr. McFarlane, and what are you going to do?"

"What do you wish me to do?" Donald asked. He did not feel so sure of his judgment after this recital as he did before it.

“We should like you to keep our secret still, and take the place of Jim in our boat. I know sooner or later her existence must be made known, but I am always hoping that time may soften their hearts. At present I know the *Triumph* would be hacked to pieces, however carefully we guarded her, if they were told the truth. The autumn is setting in; and our stormy season will soon commence. Let us try and save more lives, before we put our boat at the mercy of the Perrancove fishers.”

“It will be difficult for me to do what you wish without arousing suspicion,” said Donald thoughtfully. “How am I to get away on a stormy night, without my absence being noted?”

“Oh, they won’t expect you to make your appearance amongst them. Our former rector did not. You may be sure they will not look for you. All their energies and thoughts are with possible vessels bearing round the coast, bringing possible wrecks and plunder.”

“It is terrible,” said Donald sternly. “I will not rest until we have a proper coastguard station here, and an organized crew and lifeboat.”

“That is what took my husband to Plymouth,” said Una sadly. “And they knew it! I want you to promise me you will not do anything rashly. I expect it will be a temptation to you to do something; but will you wait until you see for yourself how matters are?”

Donald gave his promise; and Una drew a sigh of relief when she saw him walk away, and knew for the present that her secret would be kept.

Her next meeting with him was not a pleasant one. She was at present having great trouble with her father. After a period of comparative harmlessness and quiet, he had broken out into drunken frenzies. Una had steadfastly refused to welcome any more of his friends to the house; and when he saw he could not move her from this determination, he flung himself into paroxysms of rage, and took to drinking fast and furiously.

One evening he went down to the "Blue Lobster," and after waiting some hours for him, Una became anxious. She dreaded his associating with the fishers. Not only did her pride resent it, but she knew that he was too prone to treat those he was with; and the fishers were fond enough of their beer without any extra inducement to partake of it.

She was ashamed to send out any of her men after him, so determined to go herself.

Slipping on a thick cloak and hood, she made her way quietly towards the village. It was past ten o'clock, and was a still, clear starlight night. Only the rippling and swish of the waves on the beach made themselves heard. But as she stepped softly past the fishers' cottages, voices and laughter were wafted upwards to her from the "Blue Lobster."

And presently, a stumbling muttering figure approached her.

"Father," she said gently, going forward, "lean on me. I have come to meet you."

He clutched at her arm desperately; then began

talking in thick and maudling tones. She found it needed all her strength and care to guide his steps; and as they left the outskirts of the village he stumbled against a bit of fencing and fell heavily to the ground. His fall instead of stupefying him, seemed to have the contrary effect, and when she stooped to help him up, he struck her a heavy blow in the face, pouring upon her such torrents of abuse for having knocked him down, as he expressed it, that for a moment Una felt quite dazed. She dared not leave him there; she dared not touch him. She could only look up and pray that help should be sent them.

The answer soon came; but Una shivered when she heard Donald McFarlane's cheery whistle.

He almost passed them, for they were in a dark corner, before she had the courage to speak.

"Mrs. Gregson!" he exclaimed in astonishment; "you out at this time of night? Who have you here? One of those drunken fellows from the 'Blue Lobster,' I fear. The noise and din has been dreadful there to-night. You are indeed their ministering angel. Leave him to me; I will take him home."

Una's cheeks burnt with shame in the darkness as she said—

"It is my father, Mr. McFarlane."

Donald's feeling cannot be described.

For a moment he was dumbfounded. Mr. Carteret's existence had never been mentioned to him, but he wisely held his tongue. In the most matter-of-fact tone he said—

“If you will kindly take my lantern and lead the way, Mrs. Gregson, we will follow. It is a dark night though we have the stars. I wish the moon were up.”

Una obeyed him in silence.

Mr. Carteret, after a feeble resistance, resigned himself into the hands of this young giant, and they reached the Towers with no further difficulty.

At the doorway Una paused, and handed Donald his lantern.

By the light of it he saw her white and weary face with the marks of a cruel blow across it; but her little head was held proudly as if she resented and defied his pity.

“Good-night, Mr. McFarlane. I will not ask you to come in. I am very grateful for your help.”

He waited till he saw the door open and Baldwin come to their aid; then he strode home, saying between his teeth—

“Oh, may God help her and me! How I love her!”

That was Donald’s first acquaintance with Mr. Carteret. It was not his last. He met him pacing the avenue one day when sober; and Mr. Carteret took a strange liking to the bright face and winning tones of the young rector. He was entirely oblivious of that first encounter with him, and begged him to come up and talk over the news of the day with him.

Donald, hoping to influence him for good, accepted his invitation. He surprised the old man by refusing to drink with him, but would pull out his pipe and beguile the time by many an anecdote and sometimes by a song.

Mr. Carteret, in his turn, would fretfully confide in him.

“This is such an out-of-the-way hole for a man of the world to find himself in. I want my daughter to sell the whole concern and come abroad with me. She has some crazy notion that her husband is still alive, and will insist upon waiting on here. She is an obstinate little cat, and tells me she will consider herself no widow till five years have elapsed. Five years of this isolation will carry me to my grave. Can't you talk her into reason?”

“Is there any chance of Mr. Gregson returning, I wonder?” said Donald.

“None whatever. Their boat was found smashed to pieces. It is just a woman's hysterical fancy.”

Una did not often come in and sit with them. She was thankful that her father should like Donald's society, but felt ashamed that the young man should hear and see him when under the influence of drink. Mr. Carteret was rarely sober for long; but Donald had a restraining power over him, and his paroxysms of rage and drunkenness were less frequent than they had been.

Outside her home, and especially on the sea, Una seemed able to throw aside her cares and anxieties. Her animated interest in nature itself, her sparkling vivacity, and light-heartedness all made her a fascinating companion, and Donald loved to meet her so.

At the Towers her voice was in a lower key; a shadow seemed to rest on her brow, and she was rest-

less and *distract* in conversation, starting at every footfall that passed by, and apparently always fearing an unwelcome interruption from her unfortunate father. Donald never stayed with her very long.

He was making great progress in his friendship with the fishers. They admired his strength, and when they discovered that he was as good at sailing as he was in taking an oar, that he was well versed in all kinds of baits and nets, and loved nothing better than being out a whole night fishing, their hearts warmed to him, and they responded to his hearty hand-grips and cheery greeting with smiling nods of approval. They were rather taken aback when one Sunday evening he joined the idle assembly lounging on the low stone wall, and, springing upon it, gave them a short, stirring gospel address.

“Ay, men,” he said in conclusion, “you may think I’m forcing religion down your throats, but it is putting water to the lips of those who are dying for the want of it; it is bringing a sure cure to those stricken by the plague; it is pressing gold into the hands of the penniless; and bringing light and sunshine to the blind eyes. I cannot help being earnest over it. I would not if I could, for it is good news I bring, not bad, and I long that you should share in the best gift of all.”

“He do make a praper praycher!” said one old man to another; “he have the way o’ curdlin’ yer blood, and then smilin’ like an angel on ye, as he patches up what he have torn to bits!”

“Ay, us be forced to listen to 'un, for he have such a foine face! He do seem an uncommon gay parson!”

But though apparent little result was following Donald's earnest preaching, hard bits of uncultivated ground were being broken up and prepared to receive the seed of life.

One day Una was walking down the village street, when she met Kathie, running along breathlessly.

“Oh, Missy, I be off to the doctor's. All the men be out on a mackerel haul, an' old Martin have met wi' an accident. His wife be near off her head wi' fright. He got caught in betwixt his boat an' the wharf, an' he be terrible crushed.”

“I will go to him at once,” said Una. She knew how helpless his wife would be in an emergency; and when she reached his house she found Martin lying on the stone floor of his kitchen, whilst five or six women were making lamentation over him, and his wife, with her apron over her head, was sobbing hysterically.

“Ay,” said one, “do 'ee see the death-lines a-creepin' roun' his mouth an' nose? Him be turnin' black a'ready. Eh dearie me! Who'd a thought us would have another widder in this 'ere village so soon agen!”

“A seed him a goin' down town this very morn, an' I sez to my man, ‘Why, Martin have a downcast look to-day, have he not?’ Them were my very words, an', in course, he were a-seein' death in the air!”

“Eh well a day! an' whose turn will it be nex'? In course Martin were well on in life, but t'were so

sudden to be struck off. My Tom were a-sayin'——”

“Now, look here,” struck in Una’s quick decisive tones, “you are all doing Mrs. Tregarth more harm than good. Go home, every one of you, and when we want you we shall send for you. Why have you not put him to bed? You have done nothing! Go, every one of you!”

They slunk off, awed by her tones. She kept one of them back to help her raise poor Martin from the floor. As they moved him he groaned aloud, but the sound was music to his poor wife’s ear; and she dropped her apron and came trembling forward. Very gently they lifted him on to his low bed. Una did all she could to make him comfortable, but was relieved when the doctor arrived, for she was convinced he had received internal injuries.

“Ribbs badly fractured,” was the verdict; “but he may pull through!”

Una stayed with him all night; and for the next ten days she was unremittent in her care and watchfulness. The helplessness of the old couple touched her heart. When Martin recovered consciousness, he seemed ill at ease. One morning, after a restless night he called Una to his side.

“Be I goin’ to die?” he asked in quavering tones.

“We hope you are going to recover,” said Una; “You are in God’s hands, Martin!”

The old man groaned.

“If I be goin’ to die, I’d like to tell ’ee summat!”

“Would you like to see Mr. McFarlane? He was here a short time ago, but you were asleep.”

“No, I feeleth a bit more spry; I will say nought, if I be not near death!”

“If it is anything on your conscience, Martin, you can tell it to God. He will listen and forgive, if you confess it.”

Martin looked at her with terrified eyes.

“I dursn’t speak to th’ Almighty. He have struck me terrible hard, an’ His wrath be on me!”

Una tried to soothe him, but he turned wearily from her, and would say no more. Late that same day he sent an urgent message to her to come to him.

She came, and found his wife vainly trying to pacify him. He sat up in bed with feverish cheeks, and beckoned excitedly to her directly he caught sight of her.

“The devil keepeth a clutchin’ of me, Missy, an’ he meaneth to drag me down! Oh, take hold, an’ keep me from ’unl for I hath not had a peaceable moment since I done it. I hath done many sins, an’ Martha there will show ’ee a box full o’ satins, an’ rings, an’ gold, an’ I hath stifled many a cry in my day, so eager were I to get the garments from they; but I staketh my soul——”

“Hush, Martin, no oaths!”

“I tell ’ee,” he went on excitedly; “I never did a day’s work I were more ashamed o’ than when two on us put our hands to the *Flyin’ Gull*! ’Twas

revenge, Missy; the master were a goin' to spoil our gains, an' us swore to prevent 'im a bringin' coast-guards an' sichlike varmints here! Us meant to keep 'im from ever getting to Plymouth. How the boat did it was a miracle! Her were riddled wi' holes, though us plugged 'em up a bit. An' now I'm a dyin' man. Oh, Missy, perchance if 'ee tells me ye'll pass it by, perchance th' Almighty will likewise, an' land me out o' the devil's clutches! He hath gotten me hard and fast!"

For a moment Una gazed at him with horror; her heart was too full to speak to him. What she had feared was now told to her as an actual fact! It seemed to place the chance of her husband's safety farther off than ever. In the agony of the moment she impulsively dashed out of the room with a bitter cry. She met Donald coming up the garden path. He looked at her anxiously.

"Is he gone?" he said.

"Gone!" she cried. "No, he will live on. He is my husband's murderer! Don't ask me to go near him again. He will *never* get my forgiveness!"

She passed him with flashing eyes and a face that was quivering with emotion.

Donald gazed after her sadly. For one moment he looked as if he must follow her, then he remembered his duty, and went in to the sick man. He had a trying time with him, for he became almost delirious with fear and weakness.

"Missy have left me to the devil. Her be gone to

get me hung! Her be turned agen me! Her an' th' Almighty will have nought to do wi' I! They be terrible hard in judgment. Oh, passon, pray, pray for a lost soul! I cannot be taken for death, wi' the devil at my elbow!"

Donald's prayers and words seemed unavailing.

The next morning Una received a note:—

"I beseech you to forgive and come to ease a dying soul.

"DONALD MCFARLANE."

She had passed a sleepless night. The past had been with her vividly. She pictured her husband and Jim drifting helpless in the midst of the ocean, whilst their boat slowly sank with them into a watery grave. There seemed no hope now of their escape from it. "Riddled with holes" was what Martin said. Was there ever such a fiendish, cold-blooded, treacherous piece of work?

She could not pray; she thought of Martin with a shudder. She had been nursing and soothing her husband's murderer! He had planned it and carried it out with signal success, and no one had suspected him of such a crime. He had brought darkness and despair into her life; he had taken away from her the last vestige of hope that had sustained her thought so many dark hours.

Forgive him! Go to him and nurse him back to health and strength, whilst her own husband had

perished almost within sight of land without a hand outstretched to help or save him! Never! Never!

Such were her musings through the long, dark night, and then the note arrived.

She took it up wearily, but when she saw its contents she dashed it to the ground.

“I won’t go near him! O God, have pity on me! I am heart-broken!”

It was a despairing cry, but it reached Heaven; and then ensued a struggle which continued for a good hour or more.

God above did pity, and He stooped to help; but it was not in the way she would have chosen.

She was brought to her knees at last by words that seemed to ring through her heart and brain: “If ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

And then worn and weary with the inward conflict, she made her way to Martin’s cottage.

She found him in very much the same state as that in which she had left him. His wife was sobbing by his bedside.

“He have bin terrible bad, Missy, all night. The passon, he have held ’im down by force to keep ’im in his bed. The passon he have bin wi’ I all the time, but he be off now to his breakfast. Martin be gripped wi’ fever, an’ he doth not know what he saith!”

But Martin did know Una. He put out his hands beseechingly.

“Ye have not come to curse me, Missy! Ay, be merciful, for the devil, he hath got me tight.”

Then Una knelt by his bedside, and bowing her head till it touched his feverish old hands, she began to sob.

“Oh, Martin, I forgive you, and God will forgive you if we ask Him. I am only a sinner like yourself I am not fit to be a follower of our dear Master. My heart is full of rage and rebellion. Let us ask to be forgiven.”

Her tears seemed to touch Martin at once. He sank back amongst his pillows with a weary sigh.

“I be forgiven! Wife, let me sleep.”

He hardly seemed to hear Una's prayer. When the doctor came in an hour later, he found him sleeping quietly, and from that time his recovery was rapid.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RETURN

“She is coming, where we parted, where she wanders every
day;
There’s a gay surprise before her who thinks me far away!”

“She felt his footstep nigh,
One sudden lifted glance—but one.
A tremor and a start,
So gently was their greeting done
That who would guess their heart?”

Extracts from Irish Ballads.

“And now, Kathie, I have no hope left! He is dead, and Jim is dead, and I cannot keep up any more. How could they be saved, when their boat was ‘riddled with holes’?”

Una was sitting opposite Kathie, with a white, despairing face. She had been giving her an account of Martin’s confession, and Kathie had listened breathlessly. She covered her face with her hands after Una’s last despairing words.

Una thought she was, like herself, overcome with despair. She gazed at her in silent pity.

Presently Kathie raised her head, and her eyes travelled at once to that piece of paper above the mantelshelf—

“With God all things are possible.”

She pointed to it in silence, but with a gathering light in her tearful eyes.

“’Tis possible still, Missy. God hath not taken my hope from me.”

Una looked at her in wonder, then shook her head.

“God has taken my hope from me, Kathie. I am a widow, and I shall never see him again alive.”

Still Kathie pointed resolutely to her verse.

“‘All things are possible.’ I be not goin’ to mistrust our Father’s power, Missy. He be keepin’ us waitin’; but I be goin’ to wait on. He hath not telled me to give up hope; an’ I feel, oh, Missy, I cannot rightly tell the feelin’, but Jim be not passed to the other side yet. I be positive certain o’ that! What do it matter to th’ Almighty if the boat be ‘riddled wi’ holes’? Did not the dear Master keep Peter up safe and sound, wi’out a boat at all! Hope on, Missy, as I be goin’ to, an’ thank the Lord that us haven’t had to see their dear dead bodies laid out stiff before us to quench the hope and light from our hearts.”

It was impossible to resist Kathie’s hopeful persuasion.

The colour crept back into Una’s cheeks, the light into her eyes.

“Oh, I will hope still. God helping me, I will!”

She was making her way home when she met Donald McFarlane for the second time that morning. She had passed him on her way to Kathie’s cottage, and he had grieved to see her lagging steps and her sad,

despairing face. He had wished her good morning brightly, and she had responded mournfully—

“I feel there will be no more ‘good mornings’ for me, Mr. McFarlane; for life will be only time to be dragged through. I can hope no longer. Everything seems taken from me.”

He had taken himself to task after leaving her, for the secret joy that crept into his heart, as he thought that if once convinced of the reality of her loss, she might at some distant date be induced to turn to him for comfort.

Now as he met her, and noted her swift eager footsteps, the colour and brightness in her face, and the happy sparkle in her eye, he wondered with a sharp pang at his heart whether she might actually have heard tidings of her husband.

She nodded to him with a smile.

“I have been getting comfort and hope from Kathie,” she said, “and—and I think from God.”

“I am so glad,” he said heartily; and he honestly tried to believe that he was.

Yet when she had passed on, the young man wrestled in his soul with conflicting passions; and at last he sped away to a place on the top of the cliffs where he got down on his knees and spread it all out before his God.

He felt that a love that could rejoice in a loved one’s sadness was wrong and worthless in itself.

“If I really love her as she deserves to be loved,” he cried to himself, “I should long to hear that she

had obtained the desire of her heart; that her husband had been brought back to her from the grave. May I be kept from showing her by word or look that I have other thoughts in my heart. If she be happy, cannot I be happy in her happiness? What evil spirit has taken me, to wish to see her in despair; to long for a proof of her husband's death, when hope is making life still bright to her?"

Long he knelt there, but when he returned to his rectory, his face was calm and serene—a picture of his soul within. His conflict had robbed him of his light-hearted gaiety; it could not rob him of his peace.

And Una went her way utterly unconscious of the part she was playing in her rector's life. Even her father discovered Donald's secret soon, and would sometimes make the young man wince by sly allusions to it.

"She will have to acknowledge herself a widow before she welcomes any suitor," he said one day; "and that she will not do for a good four years yet, and then there will be a term of widowhood. Any man who seeks to woo her, must have the patience of Job!"

Sometimes Donald wondered if twenty years would efface the memory of that lost husband sufficiently to allow her to listen to any words of love from another.

One day he was invited over to dine at Thiselthwaite Manor, for Duncan and his bride had re-

turned from their honeymoon and were beginning to entertain the county.

Marjorie took a liking at once to the bright young rector, and made many inquiries about Perrancove and its inhabitants.

“I never was in such a dull place in all my life,” she said, shaking her pretty head in remembrance of it. “If Duncan had not come over to relieve my monotony, I think I should have gone mad. Do you know my young sister-in-law, Mrs. Gregson?”

Donald signified that he did, adding—

“She seems to feel her husband’s loss very deeply!”

“Fiddlesticks!” exclaimed Marjorie; “she may think she does; but though he was my brother, I tell you that a more dull, matter-of-fact couple I never wish to see! They were utterly unsuited to each other. My sister-in-law was just a healthy happy child, devoted to outdoor pursuits, and wrapped up in her boating, fishing, and such like; my brother was a clever bookworm, wholly engrossed in his writing and books. They married, why and how I never could understand; I believe chiefly because my brother’s friend and Una’s guardian wished it, and they lived together because custom made them. They had no affection for each other, no sympathies in common; and the worst of it was, they were perfectly content with their lot, and I could not make them see they ought to be different. Una’s heart was as cold and hard as stone. She did not know the meaning of love. I fancied my brother was waking up a little a short

time before his death, but I don't know. Since his death Una has worked herself into a remorseful frame of mind, and talks a good deal of her love for him, but it is not genuine. If you think that she is dying of grief at his loss you are vastly mistaken. She cannot deceive herself if she deceives others. The marriage was a failure, and that is a fact."

Donald came away from his visit to Thislethwaite Manor feeling strangely light at heart. He would not recognize to himself that it was Marjorie's words that had made him so; but the future seemed bright with hope; and he schooled himself to wait with patience till time had wrought in his favour, and he could venture to plead his cause.

It was very pleasant to meet Una as often as he did, and to feel that she liked his society, and confided so frankly and fully in him. She was much about the village, and was nursing old Martin back to health and strength with a patience and assiduity that astonished him. He was very softened by his accident, and Donald had many a heart-searching talk with him.

One autumn afternoon, when the sunshine lay on the water in golden ripples, Una and Kathie went out for a row. Their talk was chiefly of their absent husbands; it was the one topic which never tired them; and then, looking at the beauty of sea and sky before them, their thoughts rose upwards to the Golden City.

"You have one certain comfort, Kathie, that I have

not," said Una sadly. "If anything really has happened to Jim, you know where he has gone. He knows the way in at those gates, but Cuthbert—my husband—I pray night and morning that he may have found it—but I am doubtful—I am not sure."

"Afore my Jim left me," said Kathie gravely, "he saith to me—'Sweetheart, maybe the Lord wants me to give a message to the master on board the *Flyin' Gull*. Any ways' says he, 'I'll have a try that way.' And, Missy, be assured he did, an' if so be that he could bring an ignorant lass like meself to know the way, mightn't our Father use him to show the master?"

"Yes, yes, Kathie; for haven't you taught me? Oh, I love to think of them together! Jim so strong, and brave, and true. I will pray and believe that Cuthbert listened to him, and was led to see the right way. He used to talk about it, and he told me to find it that I might lead him. I wish I had before he left me! oh, I wish I had!"

They returned when the sun had set, and as they made for their landing-place, they saw considerable excitement on the beach.

"An extra good shoal of fish," suggested Una. "Now, Kathie, pull!"

Having their backs to the shore, they did not see one tall, upright figure standing on the shingle, with his eyes watching intently their approach. The fishers were thronging round him, but he seemed oblivious of their presence. As Kathie with a long and vigorous pull landed the boat high up on the shingle, and

sprang lightly out, she felt two arms round her waist, and with a cry of alarm she turned to face—her husband!

Yes, it was Jim, looking brown and well, though very thin. Kathie's heart almost stopped beating as she felt herself in his tight embrace. The two did not heed the onlookers. The women were pressing forward with their aprons to their eyes, ready and eager for a scene. They were disappointed that Kathie neither screamed nor went into hysterics; the men, pipes in their mouths, looked the picture of stolid indifference, but in reality were enjoying it as much as their women.

“Ay, lassie!” came in a deep sob from Jim, as he laid his cheek against the flushed, tear-stained one of his wife's, “they telled me thee hath not given over expecting me!”

“No, lad,” whispered Kathie breathlessly; “God hath bid me hope on, He hath bin' my stay!”

When Una saw the meeting, her heart sank. Where was her husband? Jim had returned alone. She stood with white face and quivering lip, unable to frame the question that she longed to ask.

It seemed to her hours before Kathie raised her head and encountered her anxious gaze. But Jim left her no longer in suspense.

“The master is at the Towers safe and well, Missy,” he said; and then without a word, Una turned and ran swiftly up the village street.

“Safe and well! Safe and well!” she kept repeating

and as she ran, she raised her face upwards.

“Thank God! Thank God! Oh, how good of Him!”

Her heart was well-nigh bursting with gratitude and joy.

She met Baldwin running down the drive bare-headed and breathless.

“Oh, mistress,” he gasped; us have been seekin’ for you everywhere. The master——”

“I know, Baldwin. Where is he?”

“Seekin’ for you, mistress. He be just goin’ down to shore.”

Una gave a little cry, as she caught sight of her husband’s figure descending the stone steps leading from her own turret tower.

And at her cry Cuthbert turned. In another moment Una’s head was pillowed on his shoulder and her arms round his neck.

“My little wife!”

“Oh, Cuthbert, I have wanted you!”

The words were not much, but the hearts of both were too full for utterance. Presently Una began to sob, and Cuthbert, clasping her to him, and soothing and comforting her, found this moment fully compensated for all the sufferings of absence. He was doubtful whether he would receive a warm welcome; and he felt a thrill run through him when her arms were clasped round his neck; when her soft lips were pressed against his, and she resigned herself with a little happy sigh into his arms.



"OH, CUTHBERT, I HAVE WANTED YOU!"

When she grew calmer, she drew herself away with blushing cheeks, then began to think of his comfort.

“When and how did you come? Are you hungry or tired? Oh, I want to know so much. I must pinch myself to see that I am alive! Come back to the house. Oh, why was I not here to welcome you!”

Cuthbert drew her arm into his.

“We did not return by sea; we came by coach to Kingstawton and have driven over. I found every one staring at me as if I were a ghost. It had such a depressing effect, that when I reached the Towers and met the frightened faces of Baldwin and Mr. Craven, I felt inclined to turn tail and run. I began to think that my wife would not want me! Tell me once more that you do.”

But Una could not answer; she only pressed his arm.

Her husband continued—

“I shall be glad of something to eat, and then I will tell you all. We have come straight from London.”

“Why did you not write?”

“We travelled as fast as any letter. May I ask who you have staying in the house? A poor old broken-down man put his head out of my study, and when he saw me bolted in again, as if he were scared out of his senses!”

“He is my father.”

Una’s tone was a little stiff. Her husband quite started.

“My dear, forgive me! I beg your pardon, but I did not know he was in England. You must tell me all about it later. Tell me, did you think I was dead?”

“Oh, I tried not to, but it was so hard! Cuthbert, could you not have written? You do not know what I have gone through!”

“I did write about a month ago—my first opportunity. Have you not received it?”

“No.”

“It may come to you yet. Here we are! I will tell you our story soon, and you will see how impossible it was for me to break the silence.”

They entered the Towers together, and Una at once set to work to supply her husband's needs.

He was weary and worn with travel; yet as she flitted to and fro with a light in her eyes and a flush on her cheek, his gaze never left her. How was it, he asked himself, that he had never appreciated her beauty and grace when first they were married?

“It was that wretched book,” he said to himself; “it sapped the very life out of me, and absorbed all my thoughts and time.”

Una stole a shy glance at him now and then.

How strong and manly and handsome he was! What a tower of strength he would be to her in all her difficulties.

“And he belongs to me!” she thought exultantly; “and I belong to him! Why did I not care about being with him before? What a wonderful thing

love is, and how strong and deep and true it is! I am beginning to understand Marjorie and Kathie, only I could not talk about it as they do."

While Kathie and Una were filled with thanksgiving at their loved ones' return, there was one in Perrancove who was going through a very dark hour of his life.

Sitting that afternoon in his study which overlooked the blue ocean in front of him, Donald McFarlane was wrapt in rosy day-dreams.

His Bible lay close to him and his notes for next Sunday's sermon. He had taken for his subject, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God."

He had been dwelling on the happiness of a Christian's life, of the freedom of service, and of the glorious hope in the future.

From such thoughts he had come down from heaven to earth, and with his elbows on his window sill had been thinking of his own life at the present time.

He raised his head with delight as the salt spray of the ocean was wafted in at his window. The same golden sunshine that had so pleased Una and Kathie on the water was lying before him now. White screaming gulls skimmed the waves; a reddish-brown sail came gliding into the bay; and beyond on the horizon were misty outlines of large vessels sailing slowly by.

It was a delicious world to be in, he thought; and a quiet dreamy happiness took possession of his soul.

One face and figure was stealing into his thoughts; a face that perhaps by the goodness of God might one day be seated by this very window in close proximity to himself. He shut his eyes and gave himself up to his imaginations. He went over his last interview with her; the tones of her clear ringing voice; the quick turn of her little head; the soft, expressive eyes—eyes which sparkled with hidden laughter at one moment, and were filled with soft wistfulness the next; he saw her bending over old Martin in his bed, soothing him when he was refractory; scolding his wife in her pretty childish way for not nursing him better. He pictured her presiding over his table when he came in from a long afternoon's visiting; nursing him if he were ill, comforting him in sorrow; a true helpmate in shade and sunshine.

And then suddenly a voice broke in upon his musings.

“If you please, sir, have ye heard the news?”

It was Sarah, of course, his gossiping cook and housekeeper. Some quarrel in the village perhaps; a birth, a marriage, or even a death.

He turned a little impatiently in his chair.

“Well, what is it, Sarah?”

“Mr. Gregson an’ Jim Tanner have come back alive after all!”

He started up as if he had been shot.

“What?” he almost shouted.

Sarah repeated her news with increased importance of manner, adding—

“Tommy Fielding what brings the fish have seed ’em both; he saith they do be wunnerful glad to be home agen. ’Tis a ressurection complete, for none on us had a thought o’ they comin’ back to their wives. ’Tis not for nothin’ the young leddy at the Towers have refused to wear her widder’s weeds!”

Donald ordered her sharply out of the room.

The blow had fallen, and it was a heavy one. At first he seemed almost stunned.

He looked away over the sea that was still covered with dancing sunbeams, but a black pall seemed to have fallen over everything. His bright hopes for the future were crushed; his dreams had vanished; life that had assumed such a roseate hue a few moments before now was a weary, monotonous round.

“Oh, my God!” he cried, “help me, strengthen me, show me I have still something to live for!”

His head drooped till it lay on his folded arms. The setting sun sent one of its soft golden rays across to comfort him. It kissed his hair, but never reached his heart, and it faded away convinced of its failure. Twilight crept in; the sea and horizon grew misty and indistinct; the gulls flew off to their nests; and the fishers’ voices on the shore were stilled. Lights twinkled out of the cottage windows; the sky became studded with stars; and the night air grew keen and frosty.

Still that bowed figure by the window. The soul

of a sorrowful man beaten about in a tempest; but it found its anchorage at length, and as the last stroke of midnight died away, Donald rose and straightened his tall figure.

“I have nothing to regret. It was no sin to love her under the circumstances. I have put it from me now. My Master’s messages will occupy my time and thoughts! ‘God helping me, I will not let this trouble spoil my life!’”

CHAPTER XXIII.

CUTHBERT'S STORY

“Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee.”
Goldsmith.

“And now, Cuthbert, begin from the very beginning and tell me all about it.”

Una was sitting close to her husband that first evening. They were by themselves in the drawing-room. Mr. Carteret had retired early to bed; he was not so stupefied with drink as to be unaware that his presence would not be desirable on the present occasion. A bright wood fire was burning on the hearth, and two comfortable chairs were drawn up to it. Cuthbert was rested and refreshed; but as his wife let her eyes dwell on his face with deep content, she noted some worn and weary lines that used not to be there.

He began his story at once.

“We had good weather down to Plymouth. I got my business done quickly and satisfactorily as far as I could see. Of course, I knew well the time it takes to make any improvements round the coast; but I fancy I convinced them of our need of a stronger force of coastguards in these parts. We got away in

due time. I thought I should be home so soon that there was no need to write. The posts are so tedious. It was towards the end of the first day that we noticed that we had sprung a leak. It is a mystery to us now how it happened; Jim fancied he could soon remedy it, but when he gave it his attention he found we were literally perforated with holes, and almost before he could tell me, we were filling rapidly, and the boat began to sink. It was dusk; we were within sight of the shore, but it all happened so suddenly that we had no time to signal for help. Jim gave me a lifebelt and took one himself. In a moment we were engulfed in the waves. 'We shall never reach the shore,' I said to Jim. He just shook his head."

"Oh, how awful!" said Una with a shudder. "How helpless you must have felt!"

"We gave ourselves up for lost. I got hold of a bit of the *Flying Gull* which was fast going to pieces, and in doing so the mizzen-mast fell with a crash, catching me across the head. I remember no more; I have only a very hazy recollection of noise, voices, and a never-ceasing grinding in my head. When I recovered full consciousness, I found myself in a Norwegian hut with Jim, and I could not imagine what had happened. He told me bit by bit. We had been picked up by a Norwegian barque. Jim had got hold of me directly I was struck, but he said we were very nearly both going under, when through the dusk he caught sight of a



"IN A MOMENT WE WERE ENGULFED IN THE WAVES."

passing vessel. His cries were heard; but we were both unconscious when they hauled us in, and I had a week or two of what Jim calls 'stupor and ravin's!' It was concussion of the brain; but I was so bad that the captain landed us at a little fishing village as soon as we reached the Norwegian coast, fearing to have the responsibility of me any longer. There some peasants took us in; but there was no doctor, and very little food that either of us could eat. We lived entirely on fish and a kind of rye cake. When I was better we began to wonder how we could get away. Vessels hardly ever touched where we were, and I did not know how to send you a message. I was making arrangements for one of the fishers to take me to Stockholm in his smack, when one day a native of the place came in his small trading barque to see some of his friends. He was much in want of another hand on board, for he had lost one of his men on the way. He volunteered to take us back to England, if Jim would fill up the vacancy on board; and we readily assented to this. I was still weak and stupid after my illness, and did not notice as time went on that we were not nearing England; but at last Jim came to me with an excited face. 'Us be bound for South America,' he said, 'an' the captin have took us in completely!' I found out to my cost that it was true; the captain was a thorough blackguard, and he not only pressed Jim into the service, but as soon as I was strong enough, I was forced to work too. I did not mind

work. I have roughed it before in my time; but I was wild to get home; and there seemed no chance of sending any message to you. When we finally reached Buenos Ayres, he cast us adrift without a penny in our pockets, and I could get redress from no one. I can hardly give you a full account of what we did. We tried our hands at everything; and we finally worked our passage home after months of privation and sickness. I wrote to you three times; but am not surprised that you never received my letters. I was told out there that robbery of the mails was of the most frequent occurrence."

"Oh, Cuthbert! No wonder you look worn and ill! How dreadful it has been!"

"But the past is past," said Cuthbert, taking her hand in his; "and if during my absence my little wife has learnt to love me, I am well content."

Una smiled up at him with a heart too full for words.

After a pause, she told him of old Martin's confession; and there was so much to relate and explain that it was midnight before they retired to rest.

Just as they were leaving the fireside, Cuthbert, taking both his wife's hands in his, stood looking down at her very earnestly.

"I have something else to tell you, Una," he said, and his tone was hushed; "something that I hope you will be glad to hear."

Una lifted her eyes to his expectantly.

"I think I have hinted to you before that I have

been seeking the Truth ever since your guardian died. I have found it at last."

A radiant look crept into Una's eyes.

"And so have I," she said. "I have found the Way; Eli and Kathie have led me into it."

"Jim was the means of showing it to me," said Cuthbert. "I little thought that a simple fisher lad had found what all my learning had failed to show me. Rather remarkable that we should both have been dealt with at the same time."

Una softly repeated under her breath—

"‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.’ The Truth attracted you, the Way attracted me; it is Life to us both."

"May God help us to live it out!"

And that was all that Cuthbert said. He was a man of few words; and never let his wife know the dark time in his soul, before the light shone in. Doubts and fears as to the true creed had beset him; he had turned from the Koran to the sayings of Budha and Confucius, and had dipped into the many Eastern and Western beliefs and superstitions. Yet he had been forced to come back to the Bible and acknowledge its superiority over all. He had read it through and through, and weighed it intellectually and theoretically; but it had failed to reach his heart, until the simple faith of his humble friend in adversity had shown him the golden key to the whole.

"My gran'feyther says," said Jim one night as they

were talking together, "that one name only do run through the whole blessed Book, and that be the One who called Himself the 'Truth', the blessed Lord, Jesus Christ. Take that name out; and the gate to heaven be fast barred and locked agen us; there be no forgiveness of sin, no resurrection of the dead, nought to live or die for!"

And bending again to the story of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, Cuthbert saw, believed, and worshipped.

The next morning he made acquaintance with Mr. Carteret, who was suavity itself, and rather relieved his host's anxious fears by his apparent straightforward sincerity and courteousness of manner. Cuthbert could not forget Mr. Endicott's description of him; and he was agreeably surprised when he came to talk to him to find him a well-read cultured man. He acknowledged to himself that, at first sight, his appearance had prejudiced him against him, but he felt that in his absence he must have been a comfort and help to his wife.

Una could not bear to undeceive him. She saw what a restraint her father was putting upon himself, and hoped that Cuthbert's presence would be beneficial in every way to him. She was herself so happy and light at heart, that the past with all its difficulties seemed to have rolled away like a morning mist. She put it from her and dwelt only in the present. She met Donald in the village the day after her husband's return and went up to him with childlike joy.

“Oh, Mr. McFarlane, hasn't God been good to me? My cup seems overflowing. Isn't it splendid having him returned in health and strength after all he has undergone? I forget—you haven't heard his story. You must come up and dine with us and hear all about it. How thankful I am that I never gave up hope and wore those dreadful widow's weeds! I am so glad I have met you. You have been such a good friend to me all this dreadful time. I don't know what I should have done without you!”

She placed her hand in his, and looked up with such grateful liking in her eyes, that Donald winced as if he had been struck.

“I am so glad to have been of any service to you, Mrs. Gregson,” he said very quickly; but his grave tone startled her.

“You are not well,” she said hastily; “you are looking tired and worn. I hope you are not in trouble of any sort.”

Then Donald smiled, and his smile, though less radiant, was as sweet as ever.

“I am quite well, thank you,” he said; “but I passed a sleepless night; I am so unaccustomed to such an occurrence that I feel a little drowsy this morning; but I shall work it off. I am just going over to Eagle's Head.”

“Oh, what rejoicing there will be there! It seems too good to be true to have both my husband and Jim back together!”

She nodded brightly to him, and passed on; but thought to herself—

“I never saw Mr. McFarlane look so grave. It is like a winter day after a summer one. All the sunshine seems to have left his face!”

She thought so still on the following Sunday, when Donald walked into the pulpit and gave out his text: “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

He had had a sore time of it on the Saturday, when he had looked over his notes for the first time since his trouble. The ring of joy and of hope through them struck him as forced and unreal.

“What is the matter with me?” he mused. “Is God not the same to me, His service here and hereafter, and all the freedom and joyful hope of a Christian’s life? Cannot I tune my feelings to the glad notes of the gospel? Is my trouble to rob my people of the joyful message I have to give them?”

The weight did not seem to lift from his soul. Donald could not be artificial; he preached from his own experience; he felt it impossible to stand up and take “happiness” and “hope” for his theme.

He sat for a long while deep in thought as he turned over the leaves of his Bible; then very deliberately he tore up his notes and set to work afresh.

He wrote rapidly for some time, and seemed to take a morbid delight in dwelling on the first part of this fresh text. When he came to the word "*yet*," he paused. Here was the pith of the whole, the diamond in the dark mine; and for the time it staggered him.

It needed another long wrestle on his knees before the full glory and beauty of it stole in upon his soul. And then the light shone in; and if it was not such a mid-day radiance, it was the soft afterglow of the setting sun that beautifies and transforms the bleakest and barest heights. It was a powerful sermon, and one that lingered in the memories of all.

A poor man and a rich God; utter failure of circumstances; complete satisfaction in soul.

"Eh dear," said Jonas Pengaff's widow, walking back to her lonely cottage, "he do know what 'tis to be lonely an' have nothin' left. He did make my eyes weep bravely. But how mighty sure he be of the Lord's help and comfort! I be of a mind to try for un!"

And Cuthbert remarked to his wife as they walked home together—

"What an eloquent parson we have! He seemed to take us into the biggest and blackest cloud one could ever imagine, and bring us through it into heaven itself!"

Which was a very fair epitome of Donald's experience.

"We will ask him up to dinner," Una said impulsively. "He has been such a comfort to me since he

came. I don't know what I should have done without him."

"Is he married?"

"No—oh, no. He is such a boy. But the fishers are beginning to love him; and you know how difficult they are in their likes and dislikes."

Donald was asked to dine, but he politely declined. Business took him away for a few days, he said; and Cuthbert was not sorry. He wanted his young wife to himself. Even Mr. Carteret's presence was a trial, though he seemed very harmless.

Cuthbert had a great deal to do after his return. He was dismayed and distressed when he looked into his business matters and realized how much money had been spent in his absence. Mr. Carteret, who still haunted the study, watched him in uneasy silence as he sat at his writing-table surrounded by papers.

"I dare say," he said diffidently one day, "you find that it requires a man to be at the head of an establishment like this. I am afraid my daughter has little idea of the value of money. She is a generous little soul, but I have had to remonstrate with her more than once over her lavish expenditure. Money has seemed to run through her fingers; and you must make allowances for her first taste of freedom in spending as and how she liked. From what she told me I gathered that you had seen fit to keep a tight hand over her expenditure when you were at home. She seems a veritable child in business matters."

This speech grated a little on Cuthbert's ears. He

could not but remember the large sums of money that Una had begged from him soon after their marriage—sums for which she had never accounted and of which she refused to talk. But he resented Mr. Carteret's tone.

"She is such a child," he said to himself, as he tried to exonerate her from extravagance. "It is true that she does not know the value of money; but I cannot understand how she can possibly have had the opportunities here of getting rid of such large sums!"

He asked her about it one morning when Mr. Carteret was walking in the garden smoking his pipe.

Una blushed, hesitated, and finally took the worst course possible—that of concealing her father's conduct and refusing to account to her husband for her expenditure.

"I drew cheques as I wanted them, and I never put them down," she said. "You taught me how to do that before you went away. I have never counted up how many cheques I drew. I daresay there were a good many; but you have been away for a long time, and I have had to see to everything!"

Cuthbert did not look satisfied.

"Can you give me no account of these constant cheques for £100—and £150?"

Una looked confused. Her husband put his arm round her and spoke very gently.

"Una, dear, will you not confide in me?"

Una's eyes filled with tears. Why should she withhold her confidence from her husband? How easy it

would be to tell him of all her father's failings! And yet she felt she could not do it. Her father was deporting himself so agreeably; his old habit of drinking seemed for the time to have left him. She could not tell her husband how he had begged from her, how many debts of his she had paid. And so she withdrew herself from his arm with a little sigh.

"I really cannot account to you, Cuthbert, for every penny I have spent. The greater part is my own money, is it not?"

She regretted her words the instant after, when she saw how they had hurt her husband.

He bent over his papers in silence.

"I will not keep you any longer," he said very quietly.

Una left the room and ran out of doors, where she wept her heart out in a quiet nook of her own on the beach. She felt that her husband's return did not disperse all the clouds that had gathered over her head, and she wondered if she would ever be without a care again.

Mr. Carteret certainly had lightened her burden in some respects. She no longer feared to go near him; but his conversations with her husband did not tend to bring husband and wife closer together.

Donald McFarlane's name was mentioned once when Cuthbert was with Mr. Carteret after dinner.

"Yes," Mr. Carteret said thoughtfully, as he sipped his wine, "taking all things into consideration, you timed your return very opportunely. The young par-

son firmly believed in your death, and looked upon your wife as a widow. He had not actually spoken to her; but when two young people of their ages are much about together, you can generally guess the result. Indeed, he made no secret of his love for her, and talked to me about it. I do not know how far she reciprocated it. Your return must have been a terrible blow to him."

"He is a nice young fellow," Cuthbert said gravely, meeting Mr. Carteret's rather quizzical gaze with perfect equanimity. "I should say his advent here will be a great blessing to the fishers."

"Eh? Ah, yes, perhaps. But I confess I do not care for such a young pastor! He is as youthful as my daughter in behaviour. I have heard their laughter and gaiety ring over the water like two children's when they have been boating together."

Cuthbert did not respond, but he pondered over Mr. Carteret's words, and sighed in his heart, as he often had before—

"If she were only not such a child! I am afraid I am too staid and sober a husband for her!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

DANGEROUS WORK

“But ah! her strongest effort fails;
With naked masts, or shivered sails
She cannot breast the waves!
Yon rock, which bares its frowning head,
Must be the seamen’s dying bed;
The boiling surge, their graves.

But see—like a l rd skimming over the deep,
The lifeboat—the lifeboat is winging her flight;
Onward she rushes, with merciful sweep,
And climbs o’er the waves like an angel of light.
She is there—she is there,
And the moans of despair
Are heard in the tempest no more!
Let the billows rage on,
For the haven is won,
And the sailors are safe on the shore.”

W. Mark. *The Lifeboat.*

Autumn came on, and with it very stormy weather. A terrific gale set in one Thursday night, and seemed to increase in violence every day. Una looked forward to launching the lifeboat again. It had a great fascination for her. In spite of all the trouble it had brought them, her ardour and determination were unquenchable. She longed to do and dare on behalf of wrecked mariners, and felt no fear of being molested again by the fishers. With her husband at home to protect her, she knew they would not dare to touch her. As she watched from her turret window, she

wondered if it would be best to entrust him with the secret. And then she decided not, for she well knew he would not allow her to be a member of its crew, and to be deprived of that pleasure would be more than she could endure. Her blood always stirred within her in scenes of excitement and danger; the greater the difficulties, the keener grew her longing to overcome them; and the roar of wind and waves exhilarated and inspired her with fresh courage and strength.

She was not surprised when she saw Kathie's signal light, and the dull booming of a distant gun explained its appearance. She was very quiet and cautious in her movements, and felt glad that her husband was not at home this night. He had ridden over to Thiselthwaite Manor to dine with his sister and sleep there, and it was only the stormy weather that had prevented Una from accompanying him.

She slipped out of the house as she thought unperceived; but Mr. Carteret had seen and marked her departure. It was hard work keeping her footing across the top of the cliffs; she saw through the misty darkness the shadow of a large vessel bearing down upon the Perran Rocks; and when she reached the Witches' Hole the *Triumph* was just in the act of being launched. Jim was there, and Donald; Kathie was at home. She was not well, and her husband had refused to let her accompany him.

"Why, Eli, you are never going without me?" said Una breathlessly, as she jumped lightly into the boat.

“Us were that, Missy,” responded the old man gravely. “’Tis the worst night us has had yet, an’ I was hopin’ that likely the master would not have ’ee come.”

“If it is fit for you to go out, it is fit for me,” said Una shortly.

She nodded to Donald, but there was no time for words; wind and waves were dead against them, and row as they did, they made but slow progress. Twice the *Triumph* was nearly swamped with the hissing boiling waves; but she rose like a cork, and with set teeth and strained muscles her crew rowed on. Eli was steering; since the assault made upon him his strength was not what it had been, and it needed an experienced hand on the rudder. As they neared the fatal rocks, they saw the ship plainly. She rose high above the water, and her crew and passengers were crowded on the decks.

Eli shook his head doubtfully.

“Us be in the very teeth o’ the gale; I doubt if us will reach ’em.”

It did indeed seem doubtful. The force of the current at one moment spun the *Triumph* round till her broadside was abreast; a huge wave rolled up, and in another moment the crew of the *Triumph* were washed overboard. Eli was the only one who kept his seat, and swung the *Triumph* round in an instant. Jim and Tom recovered themselves and clambered in. Una was washed farther out. She could swim, and her

lifebelt kept her up; but the current was carrying her away. She turned her head despairingly and saw Donald close to her.

“Leave yourself in my hands,” he said; and with one arm partly round her he got her back to the boat. She was lifted in, and he with difficulty followed. It all happened so quickly that they hardly realized their danger till it was past. Una was almost insensible. She lay with her head against Eli’s knee, whilst the three men took to their oars and rowed for their lives. But she was conscious when first she was lifted in of an arm pressing her closely, and words being breathed into her ear—

“My darling, my life! God save her!”

She wondered in a dazed kind of way who had uttered them.

They soon found that it was impossible to reach the vessel, and after several fruitless efforts returned to shore.

“Our first failure,” said Eli sorrowfully.

“Let us thank God for our own safety,” said Donald; and as they doffed their hats, with the wind shrieking and howling around them, the young rector gave thanks in a few simple words.

“’Tis my belief,” said Tom, looking out seawards, “that the wind may drop in another hour or so. Us may have another try if us waiteth.”

Una looked up brightly. She was fast recovering herself, but Donald’s gaze was a little disconcerting.

“Of course we will wait,” she said. “Think of the poor creatures expecting us and seeing us leave them to their fate.”

“You will not venture out again, Mrs. Gregson?” said Donald. “Surely you would be wise to go home and change your wet clothes.”

“Oh, I shall change those very soon,” she said briskly. “I keep a small outfit down here. I have not thanked you yet, Mr. McFarlane, for coming to my rescue. I do not think I could have got back by myself.”

She was wringing out her wet hair as she spoke. It was not an opportunity for any sentiment, and Donald wisely controlled his tongue.

“I don’t think you could have. The current was so strong. I was only too glad to be of use.”

“Missy had better go home,” said Eli quickly.

“No, Eli, I shall not.”

Further entreaty and remonstrance was useless. Tom was on his knees lighting a fire, and running into an inner recess of the cavern, Una soon returned in dry garments and joined the little group who were drying themselves in the bright blaze. They waited and watched anxiously, and at length once more launched the *Triumph*. Donald turned to Una with agony in his tone.

“Mrs. Gregson, will you, to oblige me, stay behind—or—or rather for your husband’s sake? Does he know how you risk your life?”

“Mr. McFarlane, I belong to the *Triumph*. Where she goes, I go; her rudder itself is not more part of her than I!”

Donald marvelled at her courage and enthusiasm. He said no more, and once again the brave little *Triumph* ploughed through the raging billows. Eli steered her, and kept clear of the course they had taken before. With the greatest toil and difficulty they brought her to within a hundred yards of the wreck. Alas! they found their efforts useless; the sea raged so furiously round the vessel that no boat could weather through it. But the Tanners were full of resources; they threw out a rope. The first fell short, the second was caught, and soon in the darkness they saw a figure coming towards them. He was almost lifeless when they drew him in, but Donald administered brandy to him, and he partially revived. He was a slim young fellow of slight build and foreign tongue, and proved to be a young Frenchman. Another life was saved, then another, and then a mishap occurred. The rope broke, and the *Triumph* was obliged to return with only three passengers.

It was as much as they could do to land her. Una was terribly exhausted. If it had not been for the vigorous pulling of the younger men, they would hardly have reached the shore in safety.

“Us cannot do more,” said Eli with a long-drawn breath. “’Tis just possible yon craft may last till mornin’. Her did not seem to be sinkin’.”

He and Tom said they would house the strangers at Eagle's Head.

"If the gale bloweth over, us may have another try towards mornin'," said Tom, gazing at the wrecked vessel.

Donald, Jim and Una walked across the cliffs together a short time later. It was almost dawn, but the storm raged on. When Jim turned down the village street, Donald said he would see Una home. She was very tired, and had relapsed into silence for the greater part of the way.

Now he spoke to her.

"Mrs. Gregson, have you often spent your nights like this?"

"No," replied Una, "we have never had two journeys. I wish, oh, how I wish that I were a man!"

"It is too much for you. I will never rest content till I have made our brave fishers take part in this rescue work. It is not right to keep them in ignorance of it. They are human beings; they cannot wish to see their brothers perish."

"Their one idea is to get the salvage," said Una. "The more lives that are rescued, the less they are able to appropriate of what comes ashore. If you were not so tired, you ought to go down to the beach and see for yourself what is going on."

"I intend doing so."

He parted with her at the door of the Towers. She showed him her private path down to the beach. As

he shook hands with her, he said, trying to speak lightly, but failing to steady his voice—

“If you were a sister, a belonging of mine, I would sooner cut off my right hand than allow you to do such work as you have done to-night!”

Una laughed in spite of her weariness.

“I love it. No one will keep me from it. I only wish I had a man’s strength to go on at it for longer without getting so tired. Good-night, Mr. McFarlane.”

He wrung her hand and dashed away. Una looked after him with a little smile, then a shadow crossed her brow.

Who had whispered those words into her ear? Could it have been a dream? As she came in at the door, her father came forward. He shook his head at her.

“Out all night, and your husband away. What does this mean, my dear?”

“It means there is a wreck, father,” she replied quickly. “And there are now numbers of lives going to be sacrificed because we cannot reach them. I always go out on nights like these.”

She passed him and went to her room, where she threw herself down on her bed and slept from sheer exhaustion till a late hour.

Cuthbert returned home in the middle of the day, and inquired for his wife. Mr. Carteret shrugged his shoulders.

“You should stay at home and look after her,” he

said. "She has been out all night, and came back at four in the morning in the young parson's company!"

Cuthbert looked at his father-in-law sternly.

"I think her father might take my place in **my** absence. Una is accustomed to go down to the shore if there is a wreck. I suppose Mr. McFarlane kindly walked home with her. It has been a terrible storm, and there are still some poor creatures clinging to the wreck. I have just come up from the beach, and am returning there almost immediately."

He went upstairs, and found Una just leaving her room. He looked at her rather gravely.

"Would you like to come down to the beach? I am trying to induce the fishers to go to the rescue of a shipwrecked crew on the Perran Rocks."

"I will come at once," said Una brightly. "I am so glad you are home. We have had a terrible night."

"Where did you spend it?" he asked as they descended the stone steps to the beach together.

Una's cheeks flushed.

"Not in my bed; you know I cannot do that."

"Not on the shore, for I asked for you, and no one had seen you."

"I generally go to the cliff top."

"And were you wandering about there all night alone?"

Cuthbert's tone was almost stern.

"No," faltered Una, "not all the time. I was with —with the Tanners and Mr. McFarlane."

Cuthbert drew her hand into his arm.

“Did you give a thought to your absent husband? Did you think whether he would like you out all night without his protection?”

“There was a wreck,” Una pleaded.

“What good did you do by looking at it?”

Silence. Then Cuthbert spoke warmly.

“Una, you are such a child, that you do not realize the harm you may do yourself by these night excursions. It is not the first time I have remonstrated with you about it. If you really love me, you will do what I wish in the matter. I am vexed beyond words. You are my wife, and if you do not care about appearances, I do. I will not have you out at night watching wrecks or anything else with that young McFarlane!”

Una did not speak. She was struggling to control her hot temper, but it was hard work. She withdrew her hand from her husband’s arm and came to a standstill.

“I am going home,” she said. “If I do not, I shall say something that I shall be sorry for.”

For a minute husband and wife looked into each other’s eyes. Then Una turned round and darted back to the house without a word or another glance in her husband’s direction. She was very miserable, and sat by her turret window, looking over the coast with tears gathering slowly in her eyes.

“Oh, how dreadful it is if we quarrel! And we shall, for I cannot give up the *Triumph*, and Cuthbert will make the same fuss each time, and I cannot tell

him. What shall I do? I thought when he was away that if ever he was given back to me again I would never say a cross word, or give him an anxious thought. And I nearly flew into a passion just now. He is angry with me, and I cannot explain. Oh, what shall I do? I want to go down to the shore, but I'm afraid of meeting him. I think he is very unreasonable and unjust."

She sat with such thoughts as these crossing her mind, and when a few hours later her husband came into the house, she did not go to meet him.

He came to her just before dinner time.

"Una, dear, are you coming down? Why, what a tear-stained little face!"

He stooped and kissed her, and Una flung her arms around his neck.

"Forgive me, Cuthbert; don't be so angry. I—I really couldn't help it."

"We will not talk any more about it. I dare say I spoke too warmly. It will not occur again, I hope. Now come along, for I have been working hard and I am very hungry."

He told her as they dined what had taken place.

"The wrecked vessel was driven so high on the rocks that all night long sailors and passengers were clinging to her. I tried to get hold of McFarlane, but could see him nowhere. I was determined to save them, and at last I persuaded four of the fishers to come with me. There was a strong sea on, but we managed to reach the vessel, and brought off a boat-

load. As we were rowing back I saw this mysterious, unknown rescue-boat that is so much talked about. It was coming straight out of the Witches' Hole and making for the wreck. We were so occupied when we came ashore in attending to the wants of the rescued who had nearly succumbed to their exposure and privation, that I lost sight of it; but when I looked again⁹ I saw it was taking a boat-load of passengers back to its starting-place. There has been a good bit of talk about it, but some of the salvage was coming ashore with the tide; and Perrancove is in such a ferment over it, that I left and came home, just as the preventive men appeared on the scene. I think nearly all the crew are saved except that boat-load that was taken into the Witches' Hole. I have an idea that there may be a band of smugglers secreted there. That is why I want a coastguard station here. I am only waiting for a stronger force to penetrate thoroughly into every cave of the coast, and we shall begin with the Witches' Hole."

"I am sure you will find no smugglers there," said Una, trying to speak lightly.

"Ah, well, we will see."

"It would not be likely," argued Una in desperation, "that smugglers would risk their lives to rescue drowning men."

"Yes, I think they might; for they would look for possible remuneration. I said something of the sort to one of the old fishers, but of course they believe in

the supernatural. It is impossible to expect sense from them."

The conversation drifted into other channels to Una's intense relief. She sometimes took herself to task for not confiding her secret to her husband. If he knew of a lifeboat's existence, would he not by his power and influence be able to establish it on a sure footing in Perrancove, she wondered? He was not single-handed now. Donald McFarlane was one who would do his utmost to further the cause, and he was daily acquiring more and more influence over the fishers.

Then came the thought that had most weight with her.

"The *Triumph* will be taken from me, and I shall have nothing more to do with her. Others will row in her. I shall never be able to have a share and part in her any more. Oh, I cannot give her up!"

So she sealed her lips and looked forward with more dread than pleasure to the next time that she would have to defy her husband's authority. Meanwhile Perrancove was again in a great state of excitement over this wreck and the rescued ones. As Cuthbert had seen, the *Triumph* had had one more successful trip; but the fishers were so occupied in watching for spoil, and so taken aback by Cuthbert's determination to rescue those he could, that they paid little attention at the time to the "bewitched craft," as they called it. When the members of the crew who owed their lives to her made their appearance in the village,

the fishers were not much the wiser, for they were all French by nationality and could not make themselves understood. Donald found it hard work to conceal his part in it. He had to bear with several reproachful words and glances, even from those who were thankful for his absence.

“Passons be allays just too late for action,” said Jack Pengaff, one of Martin’s special cronies; and there was an ugly sneer on his face as he spoke.

“Why, McFarlane,” said Cuthbert, when he met him the next morning, “I made certain of your assistance in launching a boat to rescue those drowning men. You made yourself scarce when you were needed most!”

The blood rushed to Donald’s cheeks.

“I arrived on the beach after you left. I had been called away,” he said, trying to speak calmly. “And now I am making arrangements for the burial of those poor fellows who have been washed ashore.”

Una went over to Eagle’s Head as soon as she could to hear about the trip in which she had not taken part. She told Eli of her husband’s words about it, adding—

“He forbids me to go out at night, Eli, without him. What can I do?”

“Eh, Missy! but if the master be agen yer comin’, ye must not come! ’Tis a wife’s dooty to honour and obey.”

“But, Eli, you want every pair of arms you can get. We are such a tiny crew, so much fewer than we ought to be. If there should be another wreck next

week, why, of course, I should have to help. I could not stop away."

"Ye could if 'twas the Lord's will," said Eli. "There be the passon now. He do be worth two on most! His muscles be bigger nor Jim's. Us could do wi'oot 'ee, Missy?"

Una almost cried.

"I helped to make the boat, Eli. I got the money for her. She is the chief interest in my life. If you prevent me from helping when there is a wreck, I think I shall break my heart.

Eli said no more.

CHAPTER XXV.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

“There is nothing makes a man suspect much more than to know little.”—*Bacon*.

Seeds of mistrust are easily sown. Mr. Carteret did not really wish to harm his daughter; but he was vexed that she had tried to keep him in check when her husband was away, and wishing to retain the friendship of Cuthbert, imagined that by agreeing with him in every matter, and assuming the *role* of a virtuous and careful parent, he would further this object.

Cuthbert could never forget that Donald McFarlane had had the “audacity,” as he termed it, to love his wife. He could not bear to see them together; he grudged every bright look and word that Una gave him. He tried to control his feelings. He felt quite assured of his wife’s loyalty and love; and yet when one morning he met them coming up the village street in close and earnest confabulation, his blood rushed hotly through his veins, and he spoke abruptly and sternly—

“Una, I want you.”

Una raised her eyes in astonishment at his tone. Donald raised his hat.

“Good morning, Mr. Gregson.”

Cuthbert responded curtly, and the young rector left them with a cloud upon his brow.

“What is the matter, Cuthbert? Has anything happened?”

Una spoke a little timidly. Her love for her husband now was so strong that she feared to vex or displease him; she could not bear the slightest coldness in his tone towards her.

“Nothing is the matter,” he replied, gravely; “but I do not think you need spend all your time out of doors with Mr. McFarlane. What have you been talking about so earnestly?”

Una hesitated for a moment.

“I have been telling him of a difficulty of mine and asking his advice, and I do not quite see with him about it. I always think he lives so near to God that I ought to do what he advises but I cannot bring myself to do it.”

“And may I not ask about this difficulty?”

Husband and wife were crossing the cliff top, and coming to a pile of granite rocks he sat down and made room for her beside him.

Una shook her head.

He leant forward earnestly and took her hand in his.

“Una, dear, we are man and wife. We drifted apart for a time; but I trusted that God had drawn us together with a closer and surer tie than ever we had before. We both belong to Him; we both **are**

trying to serve him. If we are one in heart, do you not think you might confide your difficulty to me?"

"Oh, I suppose I ought, but I cannot," said Una desperately. "You do not know, you cannot understand, and —and Mr. McFarlane does. It is a great interest in my life; something I cannot give up. He says I ought to, and I know you would say the same. Oh, I am afraid I am not serving God at all, for if it is His will that I should give it up, I cannot do it. My will is against His, I feel it is. I wish you had not interrupted us. I think, perhaps, Mr. McFarlane would have helped me. I cannot tell you, Cuthbert; it is the only secret I have from you, and it is nothing wrong in itself."

Cuthbert was not appeased by this speech.

"If you can share any secret with a stranger instead of with your husband, it cannot be a right one," he said coldly.

"Oh," said Una impulsively, throwing up her arms, "sometimes I wish I were free and unfettered. I gave up my liberty when I married you. I did not think I should, but I did. Your very love for me makes you watch and weigh all my words and actions. I have always done as I like. It is so hard to be checked and thwarted."

"You have had a great deal of liberty in your life," said Cuthbert bitterly. "I quite agree with you. And I suppose being mistress here in my absence has made my return seem very unpleasant. I do not think I am a taskmaster. God knows your happiness

is my first concern. I have only been back a few weeks, and yet you are already pining for your freedom again. Is this your difficulty? Is this the subject upon which you have been consulting McFarlane?"

Una looked at her husband with sparkling eyes.

"Cuthbert, how can you! How dare you think such a thing! When you know, when I told you of my wretched misery during your absence! Oh, why do we always now seem on the verge of a quarrel! I love you, I love you! And you know I do. Don't look at me so coldly. What have I said or done to make you speak so cruelly?"

She clasped her hands around his arms and looked up into his face entreatingly.

He still preserved his stern gravity; but he spoke more gently.

"I do not want to be unkind. You are such a child that you cannot see the cause of my anxiety. When I was away you naturally turned to Mr. McFarlane for advice, though I must confess I had rather it had been your father; now I am home again I consider it shows a want of trust and confidence in me to take your difficulties to any one else. And I must request you in future to hold as little intercourse with Mr. McFarlane as possible. He is a single man——"

"And I am a married woman," exclaimed Una hotly; "and he is the rector of this parish. He was talking to me as a clergyman this morning. He was telling me of all the work I could do in the village;

that I had been 'saved to serve.' He was reminding me that every Christian ought to like a running stream, constantly receiving from its source, constantly passing on. And I was resolving in my own mind what I should do. Now you are angry because he has been trying to help me on in the right way. You want me to promise I will not speak to him again, and then you wonder that I resent your authority; you are astonished I should gasp for freedom."

Cuthbert rose from his seat.

"I will say no more now," he said, a little wearily. "If you misunderstand me, I cannot help it. Let us go home."

"May I go to Kathie? I want to see her. Must I ask your permission before I speak to her?"

He turned on his heel and left her. Una dashed back to the village, and almost flung herself into Kathie's kitchen, so great was her anger and perturbation of mind.

Kathie looked up from her needlework by the fire with startled wonder.

"Oh, Missy, what has happened?"

"I've quarrelled with my husband; and I'm a wicked creature, and I'm perfectly miserable!"

Una gasped these assertions out breathlessly, then sitting down, she rested her arms on the table and, laying her head down on them, began to cry.

"Oh, Kathie, it is all about the *Triumph*. Mr. McFarlane says I ought to tell my husband about it;

he says I ought to give up rowing in it, for I do it without his knowledge. I cannot give up my part in it. I cannot tell my husband. Do tell me that it is not wrong. If it had not been for me, the *Triumph* would never have been built. I thought, and helped to make, and christened, and launched her! She is my greatest interest in life. Mr. McFarlane says I could have other interests, and he wants me to start a little club or meeting for women in your kitchen; he would come and speak to them; he says I ought to be their friend, and get to know their sorrows and difficulties, that sending them soup and blankets is not enough. I was enjoying this talk so, and thinking what great things I would do, and feeling so very good when—when my husband came up and spoilt it all!”

She poured this all out very incoherently, then she began to sob afresh.

Kathie said nothing for a few minutes; then she said reflectively—

“I think if Jim had not told me about the *Triumph*, I should have broken my heart. ’Twas the only cloud that came to me after us were married. I telled Jim that there could be no secrets betwixt them that loved each other!”

“Oh, I know,” said Una, wiping her eyes and sitting up straight in her chair. “I remember the state Jim was in when I told him he was not to tell you about it. I was very angry with you for making such a fuss! And I am angry with my husband now.”

“The *Triumph* must not bring a curse instead of a blessin’ upon you,” said Kathie, solemnly. “’Tis a terrible bad business when anythin’ gets betwixt husband an’ wife. I would rather cut a hole in her bottom and sink her out to sea than let her be a bone o’ contention in a household!”

“I see you will not take my part.”

“I think now that the parson knoweth about her, the master ought to do so too!”

Una began to reflect.

“Perhaps,” she said after a pause, “the next storm may be in the daytime. My husband could not object to my going out with her in broad daylight. It is only my being out at night without him that he objects to. I need not tell him about it if I do nothing that he would dislike my doing. It is only going out when he does not know that seems to be wrong. Perhaps I shall tell him about it soon, Kathie. Only if I do, it will be a secret no longer.”

“That will make no odds, if it be the right thing to do; God Almighty will look after her safety. I sometimes think we take a wonderful care and pride in keepin’ it secret; but perhaps after all her would do more good if everybody knew about her.”

“If they did, they would hack her to pieces,” replied Una emphatically.

She left Kathie after further talk and went to her husband’s study.

She found him at his writing table.

“Cuthbert, I am sorry I spoke so to you. Forgive me. I did not mean half I said.”

Cuthbert looked up with a smile, and put his arm round her.

“I know you did not, little woman.”

“And,” went on Una, as she gazed up at him thoughtfully; “I have made up my mind that I will tell you my secret some day; but not just now. And when you hear it, you will not think me wicked at all; you may be sorry for what you think about me. I think you will.”

“What do I think about you?”

“Oh, that I am just a child, and self-willed, and want my own way instead of yours!”

Cuthbert’s smile broadened.

“I do not think that is putting the case fairly. Una, dear, let us not seek our own way at all, either of us, but God’s way. Then we shall make no mistakes.”

“And you do not mean what you said about Mr. McFarlane? I may speak to him when I meet him?”

Cuthbert was silent. He hated himself for being suspicious; and yet after what he had heard about Donald, he could not bear that his wife should be continually in his society. Suddenly on the impulse of the moment, he turned to her—

“Una, look me straight in the face and answer me. Is Mr. McFarlane much to you?”

“What do you mean? I like him very much. He is so happy, so true, so good!”

“If I had really been drowned; if you had seen my dead body; if you had been left a widow—would Mr. McFarlane have ever been to you other than he is now?”

Una understood at last, and the blood rushed to her face, dyeing it a deep crimson. She hid it on her husband’s shoulder.

“How can you, Cuthbert? How can you?”

“Do not think me cruel. I believe him to be the soul of honour, but when I was away, did anything occur between you? Did he ever say a word to show you that he thought your husband was dead?”

“Nothing, nothing!” she whispered. Then suddenly in a flash the words that she had heard, when being rescued by him, came back to her: “My darling! My life! God save her!”

Cuthbert pulled her round in front of him and confronted her steadily.

“Look up, Una, and be truthful!”

“I—I—oh, Cuthbert, you are cruel! He never spoke to me except—except—oh, how can I tell you? Do you really think I would be so disloyal, so unloving, so *awful* as to listen to anything that you might not like to hear? If you doubt me, I think my heart will break!”

Cuthbert sighed, then he kissed her.

“I do not doubt you, Una, only—you are such a child!”

“Such a child!” That phrase was becoming hateful in Una’s ears. She drew herself up proudly.

“No, Cuthbert, you shall not treat me so. I am your wife, if I am a child. You shall honour and respect me. You have brought a big blot into my sunshine by your words just now. And it is false; all your suspicions are entirely false. Who has been poisoning your mind against me? Is that why you were so angry at my walking with Mr. McFarlane? I cannot bear to think you had such thoughts of us!”

“My darling, forgive me. I have cause to speak, but I cannot explain. I am certain you have been innocent and ignorant of what other people say. I only want you to give no further cause for such sayings.”

They parted good friends; but each had a sore feeling in their hearts, and Una was more to be pitied of the two. She kept out of Donald's way as much as possible, and when she met him she was restrained and awkward in his presence.

Donald himself was going through deep waters. He schooled himself to meet and talk with her with the greatest equanimity, but the effort it cost him was only known to himself. He longed to get away, and yet his duties would not allow him to forsake them. He was relieved when Una no longer sought his society; and yet, with the inconsistency of a man, felt hurt that she wished to avoid him.

He was coming through the village late one night, when he saw Mr. Carteret stumble out of the “Blue Lobster.” He had been so glad of his recent reforma-

tion that the sight was a disappointing one, and he soon saw that he would need his help.

Mr. Carteret had given way to his temptation at last, and had been drinking long and heavily that evening. He grasped Donald's arm with muttered thanks, but was in an argumentative frame of mind, and his progress was necessarily a slow one. It was past eleven o'clock when they reached the Towers, and Cuthbert himself opened the door to them. Mr. Carteret had just sense enough to try to pull himself together, but it was a vain effort; and when Donald released his hold of him he sank down into an abject helpless heap on the ground. Cuthbert was disgusted and shocked. He looked at Donald for an explanation, and he gave it, adding—

“May I help you to get him upstairs?”

“Yes; but we must do it quietly. I would not let my wife know it for worlds!”

“She would not be surprised,” said Donald quietly. “She had a terrible time with the poor old man when you were away. I used to marvel how she could go through it!”

“Does every one know—know of his failing?” Cuthbert asked.

“I am afraid they do. He has been a different man since your return, but I feared the improvement would not last.”

Cuthbert said no more. He got his father-in-law to bed, and thanked Donald for his services. But he felt hurt again that Una had kept him in ignorance

of what every one else knew but himself. It was the beginning of an outbreak of drinking; and Mr. Carteret did not seem able to control himself any longer.

“Why did you not tell me about it?” Cuthbert asked his wife one evening when Mr. Carteret was unable to appear at dinner, and was still drinking spirits in his room.

“I was ashamed to, Cuthbert. He is my father. Oh, it is terrible; there seems no cure for him! You don’t know what I have been through.”

“Can you not tell me about it? Why am I never to have your confidence?”

“You shall have it. Do not speak so reproachfully; only it is not easy to tell you things against—against my father!”

She gave him the full account, and as Cuthbert listened he could hardly curb his indignation. She told him of Mr. Carteret’s friends, of her repeated attempts to reform him, and her hopeless failures.

“I heard something of your father’s friends from Marjorie when I dined with her the other day; but I understand now the hints that she let drop. She said I must come to you for the information she would not give me. And she told me she had been indiscreet about your affairs once, and could with difficulty gain your forgiveness! What did she mean?”

“Oh, that was a different matter,” said Una. “It was good of Marjorie not to tell you, for of course she knew—everyone did. And—and I should like to

tell you something else. I think perhaps I ought to do so, for you have misjudged me.”

“Am I to hear this wonderful secret at last?”

“No, no” and the colour mounted to Una’s cheeks. “It is not that. It is only about the money I have spent. I tried to pay my father’s debts. He was always in such difficulty, and when he came to me I could not bear to refuse him. Surely I was not wrong?”

Cuthbert took her face between his hands and kissed it. This explanation lifted a heavy load of doubt and anxiety from his heart; and a light came into his eyes that had been absent from them for many a day.

“Oh, my little wife,” he said with deep feeling, “why did you not tell me this before? Why did you make a mystery over such a very natural proceeding? Forgive me for doubting you. Thank God, I believe I am gaining your confidence little by little!”

Una laid her head on her husband’s shoulder. Never had she felt such a strong impulse to tell him about the *Triumph* as now. Surely her opportunity had come! She was about to open her lips, when there was a knock at the door. Baldwin entered with a message that Cuthbert’s lawyer wished to see him, and the opportunity was gone.

Later on Una persuaded herself that she had better keep her secret a little longer.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NOBLE VENTURE

“A brother’s sufferings claim a brother’s pity.”
Addison.

Cuthbert had a very serious talk with Mr. Carteret when he was in a fit state to be reasoned with. He told him he could not continue to remain as his guest unless he promised him he would abstain from drink. The poor old man broke down and sobbed like a child.

“I am drinking myself to death,” he said, trying to control his emotion. “The young parson has been talking to me. He wants to din religion into me. I tell him no power in heaven or earth can take away the love of drink from me! I know it is killing me, but I cannot keep away from it. I had better take myself off from your respectable household. It was an attraction I could not resist—coming to see one of my own kith and kin. I was poor; she was rich. I felt I should like to give her a chance of doing her duty by me. She has not disappointed me in that respect; but it is duty, and not love, that has regulated her action towards me. I suppose I was a fool to expect anything else. I saw after I had been in the house a week that she had neither respect nor affection for me. It is a cruel thing to separate a

daughter from her only surviving parent. I have to thank Endicott for that! If I had had her to live for, to work for, I might have turned out a different man. Circumstances have been against me. Give a dog a bad name—you know the rest!”

Mr. Carteret stopped, and in spite of his artificiality and misrepresentations of the truth, Cuthbert pitied him from the bottom of his heart.

“You could have lived and worked for your wife,” he said, trying to speak sternly. “You broke her heart, and you would have dragged up your daughter in misery and shame. Be thankful that her youth has been a bright and happy and wholesome one; and do not rail against the one who made it so!”

“And now my daughter casts her father out of her house to want and ruin! I said to McFarlane just now, when I met him out of doors, ‘Keep your religion for those that like it! It has never brought me any good, and never will! It is only words, words—empty words! Word’s won’t save a man when he is in the gutter. You can preach at him, you can pray with him, you can weep for him, and you may work upon his feelings till he is ready to hand his soul over to you. But as for doing him any practical good, your religion is an utter failure! You go your way, and he goes his. He sinks deeper than ever in what you call sin, and you shrug your shoulders and say ‘Poor devil! I tried to help him, but he is too far gone to be reformed!’ That is the extent of your religion!’”

Mr. Carteret spoke excitedly. Cuthbert listened to him in uneasy wonder.

“What would you suggest?” he asked, looking at his father-in-law thoughtfully.

“Can a plague-stricken victim suggest a cure to a doctor who is longing to get rid of his presence? Bah! We will talk no more. When are you wanting me to clear out? For as to depriving myself of my only comfort in life—you know that is a moral impossibility! I dare say it is as well. I could not go through many such days as I have passed in this dull hole trying to be sober and respectable! It saps the spirit out of me in more ways than one.”

Cuthbert pondered much over his father-in-law's words.

A few days later he was riding out by himself, when he was overtaken by Donald also on horseback, who was going to visit one of his outlying parishioners.

Cuthbert was at first rather distant in his manner towards the young clergyman. He admired him as a preacher and respected his goodness; he even felt the fascination of his attractive personality, and perhaps this last fact had most to do with his determination to see as little of him as possible.

But Donald was too much in earnest on this day to notice Cuthbert's manner. He plunged at once into the subject that was uppermost in his heart and thoughts.

“How is Mr. Carteret this morning?”

"I cannot say there is any improvement in him."

"What do you feel about it, Gregson? Has he opened out at all to you? I tell you, he wrung my heart the last time I saw him. It is a case of a soul struggling to free itself from an inevitable bondage. I believe in the power of Christ. I have wrestled on my knees for him; but I cannot instill a gleam of hope into his mind. He will not pray for himself; he has no faith that prayer will save him; and I am almost inclined to be despondent about him myself."

"He seems to think our religion is a mere matter of words!" said Cuthbert slowly.

"And so it is," said Donald with a sudden fire in his eye. "I asked him what I could do to show him that it was not, and do you know what he said to me?"

"No. It was yesterday you called on him, was it not? I spoke to him in much the same strain a few days ago, but he scorned my words."

"Well, he said this to me: 'If you really want to help me, come and live with me; be with me night and day. Be my keeper, guard me from what has hitherto been my only companion. If I were a rich man, I would hire you as my body-guard for a good twelvemonth or so. I would travel with you; I would get away from a place that from its dulness and isolation is driving me mad!'"

Cuthbert listened thoughtfully. Donald continued—

"I have been thinking of his words ever since. I fancy our Master would have us weigh them in our

minds and act upon them. The poor wounded traveller on the way to Jericho was not just clothed, and sent on his way. He was nursed and 'taken care of' for many a long day after."

"Are you thinking of becoming his keeper?" Cuthbert asked, wheeling round his horse in astonishment, and looking straight into the fair glowing face of the young clergyman. "Do you realise what it would be to tie yourself to a man of his dissipated tastes? I know his history better than you do. My friend Endicott hoped that he and his daughter would never meet; and it has been an evil day for them both that they have done so."

"It is my parish that is my difficulty," said Donald gravely. "It is weighing a hundred souls or so against one that makes me hesitate. Yet our Master thought much of individual cases; and only one soul is worth the work of a lifetime."

They rode on in silence. Cuthbert was thinking hard. At last he said—

"Look here, McFarlane, I honestly want to help the old man in the best way possible; not only because he is my wife's father, but because as a man and a Christian I cannot ignore his claim upon me. If you will take him abroad for a year, I will give you the means to do it. I will arrange for a parson to take your place. You will save him if any one can."

"No," said Donald gravely; but my Master will. May I think over the matter and let you know. I

own I have strong reasons for wishing to leave Perrancove for a time. If I could see a good substitute installed in my place, I would go cheerfully and willingly. But it is hard to leave my people just when I am becoming really intimate with them.”

“Think it over. You will be a brave man if you attempt his reformation; but I believe you will succeed. Cheery, bright companionship will do much towards helping him, and God will do the rest!”

They parted, but as Cuthbert rode away, he said to himself—

“That is a splendid fellow with real grit in him. I would that I could catch some of his zeal and love for others’ welfare.”

And the more he thought of the plan the better he liked it; the more he esteemed the young fellow, who was ready to sacrifice so much for the sake of a confirmed and miserable drunkard.

He felt rather ashamed of a thought that kept stealing in above all others.

“He will be removed from my wife!”

And he wondered if Donald himself had her in his mind when he said he had strong reasons for wishing to leave Perrancove. •

If he had been allowed to peep into Donald’s room that evening, he would have seen that his surmise in this respect was a right one.

Donald was pacing his room restlessly, and from quick, disjointed sentences he was uttering, one could tell that he was praying.

“It is an answer, an opening! O God, my Father, I thank Thee!—Care for the souls of my people!—It is a cross, but I gladly take it!—Better be out of sight of her sweet face, out of sound of her clear voice, than giving way to sinful thoughts. I—a chosen messenger as I humbly believe, to be continually breaking the Tenth Commandment! Oh, Father, have pity! Forgive! Purge me afresh from all that is displeasing to Thee!”

Donald was not one to rush into difficulties without foreseeing them. He knew the weary, disheartening charge it would be. He knew the deadening effect it might have upon his own soul, to be tied daily and hourly to one who not only was earth-bound in all his desires and interests, but who took his pleasures in sin and degradation; who “loved darkness rather than light!”

“Shall I be strong enough to resist the downward influence?” he thought; and then with a glad rebound he added—“I can do all things through Christ!”

He went up to the Towers the next morning, and met Una and her husband walking in the garden together.

They turned to him expectantly, and as Una shook hands with him, she said a little shyly—

“My husband has been telling me about your plan Mr. McFarlane. I can hardly hope that you will do it.”

“I will—God helping me—gladly!” he responded gravely.

Cuthbert gripped him by the hand.

“I felt you would. Come into my study and talk it over.”

For a moment Donald looked at Una. Tears were in her eyes.

“We shall never be able to repay you,” she said; and, turning away quickly, she ran in the house.

The two men were still deep in confabulation about half an hour afterwards, when Mr. Carteret shuffled into the room. He looked his very worst. His eyes were bloodshot; his hair almost on end; his steps were trembling and uncertain. Cuthbert rose and drew forward a chair for him.

“We were just wanting to see you,” he said gently. “McFarlane has been talking to me about a plan of his. I will let him speak for himself.”

Then wisely he left the room, and Donald, taking the old man’s hand in his, said brightly—

“Will you be my patient if I turn from a parson into a doctor for a short time? Will you come a sea trip with me, and leave Perrancove for a while?”

“Eh, lad, God knows I would!” ejaculated Mr. Carteret with real feeling.

“There is nothing to hinder us from setting out very soon then.”

“But who is going to pay?” demanded Mr. Carteret querulously. “I am a poor man. I can hardly afford to keep myself, much less another!”

“That will be arranged easily. Mr. Gregson will explain things to you. And now look here, let us go over our cruise together, and discover how much we can see of foreign countries in a twelvemonth.”

He talked away brightly; but as he was taking his leave, Mr. Carteret gripped him by the coat sleeve.

“What are you doing this for? Not for my sake?”

“For yours, for mine, and first and foremost for the sake of my Master!”

“Eh, yes. You expect to reform a drunkard and turn him from his evil ways! If I thought you were going to cram religion down my throat every hour I would not stir a step with you. You parsons can never control your tongues!”

“I am going to forsake my *rôle* as a parson and substitute that of a private physician and friend.”

Mr. Carteret shook his head feebly, then roused himself, and spoke a little excitedly—

“You mean well; Gregson may mean well. In any case he and my daughter have done themselves a good turn by this bit of business. They will be rid of an inmate who shocks their delicate feelings and brings disgrace on their household. I am to go to sea, am I? Well, a jump overboard may soon rid the world of one who is not wanted. There! Do not mind an old man’s bitterness! You are strong and well and happy; you have not come to the length of your tether! If you believe in a future reward, you will get it! Meanwhile, I give you thanks. I am not entirely destitute of gratitude. My self-respect

and pride have died a violent death long ago; but a gentleman requires much grace to own his fallen position, and kiss the hand which has pointed it out to him. I cannot yet knuckle down to my son-in-law, so tell him to keep out of my way for the present! Good day."

When once the matter was settled, it did not take long to arrange all necessary details. A curate was found who was willing for a small stipend to take charge of the parish. He was a delicate man, who hoped to derive much benefit from the salt sea breezes, and earnestly did his best for the fisherfolk.

There was grievous lamentations in the village when Donald's departure became known. Two of the heaviest drinkers in Perran Cove arrived up at the parsonage one night, declaring they would sign the pledge and never touch a drop of beer again if their "parson 'ud keep to home an' not leave 'em!"

The young rector needed all his courage, all his strength, to keep a bright face and demeanour. Yet when Una stepped up to him to wish him goodbye, with her grey eyes full of gratitude, he felt sufficiently rewarded already.

"You will save him," she said. "Cuthbert and I will pray for you night and day. You will bring him back to us a changed man; it is what our Lord would have done Himself!"

And those were the words that rang in his ears across wave and storm, through weary months of watching and toil: words that brought a smile to his

lip and a light in his eye when his task seemed almost overwhelming.

His absence in Perrancove brought Cuthbert and Una in close contact with all the fishers. Husband and wife were determined to support their present parson, and where he was unable to work they gladly offered themselves as substitutes.

“You will soon begin to love the sea and the fishers as much as I do,” said Una one day, when her husband returned from a long visit to old Martin.

“I am afraid you will not like the news I have to tell you,” he said, smiling. “I must leave you for a short time and go up to London.”

Una looked at him with startled eyes.

“I cannot be left. I must go with you,” she said.

“I think not, dear. One of us is wanted here while McFarlane is away. I wish Lester were not so diffident with the fishers. They think he is frightened of them, and are inclined to bully a little. It is about my book that I wrote. It has sold so well that a fresh edition is to be brought out. I must see my publishers about it. It may need some revision.”

“Does that mean that you are going to shut yourself up into the study again, and live your life alone?”

“No; I may safely promise you that those old days will not come back. But my book has been a help to many, Una; it would be wrong for me to withhold my hand from improving it in any way. I have had many testimonies as to its usefulness.

“Oh, I know, I know; but it nearly cost you your wife!”

Cuthbert looked at her tenderly.

“I think my little wife is waking up to see that there are great realities in life; a work for each to do, and strength and guidance given as we need it. You are not content now to spend your days in shrimping and boating, as in old times, are you?”

“I never was content with those occupations only,” said Una, looking at him thoughtfully. “Sometimes I wonder, Cuthbert, if you will still think me a thoughtless child when I am fifty years old. Will you never give me credit for any earnestness of purpose, any object in life, save that of shrimping and fishing? Do you think I have no mind, no will of my own?”

“I think you have a very decided will of your own,” responded Cuthbert, with a mixture of fun and of gravity in his tone. “I was just congratulating you on your growth. I think you are taking a real and deep interest in those who are in need; and I can quite trust my wife to manage the household, and all Perrancove too, if necessary, in my absence.”

Una sighed.

“How long will you be away?”

“Not more than a fortnight or three weeks, I hope.”

“I shall be miserable the whole time!” said Una; and her husband could not comfort her.

CHAPTER XXVII.

UNA'S APPEAL

“There is no true potency, remember, but that of help; nor true ambition, but ambition to save.”—*Ruskin*.

Cuthbert went, and his wife bravely set to work to fill up her time with various occupations, hoping vainly that by so doing her thoughts might be taken from her absent husband.

“I don't know how it is,” she said to Kathie; “I have a presentiment that something is going to happen before my husband returns. I am quite relieved when each day is over, and no evil has befallen me. Do you believe in presentiments, Kathie?”

“Ay,” said Kathie, “you call 'em by a big name, Missy; but my feelin's told me Jim was not dead. Be that a presentiment?”

“Of course it was, and a very pleasant one. I think I am getting nervous. I met old Patty out this morning. Do you notice that she always disappears when things go on as usual, but directly anything happens amongst us she is back again like a bad penny? She said to me in her shrill, sing-song voice—

‘Master away once and twice!
Evil be brewin’, once, twice, thrice!
Fishers and Sea
Tell summat to me,
An’ the Witches’ Hole do hide
What the honest folk can’t bide!’

I was quite afraid she would be heard and understood. And it is no good trying to stop her, for she only runs away and gets more excited. Have you seen her?”

“Yes; I gave her some hot broth, poor creatur’! I often wonder how her do live, but her seemed very quiet like when her was here!”

Una saw Patty again several days later, and this time the lads were chasing her through the village. She was screaming, half in mischief, half in terror, the doggerel ryme which she had sung to Una; and it had an exasperating effect on her tormentors. They repeated it to the older men, and the subject that had for a time lain dormant in their minds now came to the surface again and was discussed with much animation and interest. All were of the opinion that Patty, witchcraft, and the devil himself had helped to create that unknown boat which appeared and disappeared so mysteriously.

“Her be a right down witch!” was the opinion of all; and the oldest amongst them began relating tales that had been handed down to him of the burning of witches and such like.

“If us could once catch the varmint,” one man said doggedly, “us could take the law into our own hands, an’ clear Perrancove of such a pest; but ’tis danger-

some work to meddle wi' a witch, for if her slips out o' ovr hands, her will for sure ill-wish us or cast a evil eye on us!"

"Ay, but if us cotched her, us wouldn't be the fools to let her slip!"

"There be Missy," said another, "an' them sneakin' Tanners; they do be all on the witch's side!"

"In course they be, fur 'tis my belief that Patty did giv' 'em the craft! 'Tis a bewitched craft, that it be!"

The result of all this was that one afternoon towards dusk Patty was chased once again, but this time it was not by the lads, but by strong, able-bodied men, and they meant more than play; they were determined to catch her and make her suffer for all her misdeeds.

Unfortunately Una was not at hand to befriend her; the Tanners were away fishing; and the poor old creature fled through the village and up to the cliff-top, feeling that her last hour had come. She was wonderfully fleet of foot, but her pursuers saw to their delight that at length her steps were flagging. Gradually they lessened the distance between them, and then suddenly, as one man was within almost an arm's length of her, she plunged into some gorse bushes and vanished from their sight. Her pursuers paused and looked at each other in blank astonishment; then one said, as he slapped his hand on his thigh—

"Look 'ee out for a hare, lads! A hare! Her be

a real praper witch, an' her be in the bushes still. Beat the bushes, lads, an' us will catch her yet!"

It was dusk. As their stout cudgels were brought into requisition, a frightened rabbit made its escape across the short, springy turf.

"Away, lads! Her be away!"

With shouts and yells the fishers tore after the little creature, and when tired out with their hopeless chase, they returned to the village more than ever convinced that poor Patty was a "praper witch," and as such they ought to burn her.

Their amazement and consternation was great when shortly after, coming across their bay from the Witches' Hole, and heading for the Towers' Creek—Una's private landing-place—was Patty in the mysterious boat.

Their wonder as to how she had got there was eclipsed by their furious longing to get hold of her.

At last it seemed to them the chance had come. The boat and Patty had fallen into their clutches. The beach was crowded in no time; women and children poured out of their cottages; lads began making a pile of brushwood and bits of old timber. Some of the men crept cautiously along the shingle to the creek; but they suddenly stopped and retraced their steps. It was high tide, and the current was very strong. To their delight they saw that old Patty was becoming exhausted with her efforts, and the tide was bringing her swiftly and surely into Perrancove. It was the same current that so often brought in salvage

from wrecks; the fishers looked at each other in dumb amazement.

“ ’Tis a sign from above,” said one. “Heaven be aidin’ us to rid the coast o’ such a curse!”

“Her be driftin’ in sure enough, an’ us will have a gran’ bonfire this night!”

Some of the boys put a light to the heap of wood they had collected, a woman added a little lamp oil, and soon the beach was enveloped in a ruddy glare.

It shone on the excited fishers, and on the terror-stricken old woman in the boat. In vain she tried to turn the *Triumph* round; she seemed paralysed with fear, and at last she crouched down on the seat, clutching her oars desperately, though she never pulled a stroke. She saw the bonfire; she saw the cruel, angry faces round her; and she knew there was no escape. Her will had no longer power over her limbs; the sea was gently and surely taking her to a cruel death.

The poor old woman was now past realizing what she was doing. When pursued on the cliff-top, she had made for the secret entrance to the Witches’ Hole. The innocent rabbit had perhaps saved that entrance from being discovered; but Patty had not the sense to act coolly. She gained the bottom of the cave, but she fancied her pursuers were following her still, and with almost a superhuman strength, she dragged the *Triumph* down to the beach and launched her. She thought she would be found in the cave and murdered there, and the terror of that thought lent

strength to her aged wrists. The *Triumph* danced over the water merrily. Not since her first launching had she been out in such weather as this; she seemed to respond to Patty's feeble strokes with joy and delight. The strong tide carried her rapidly along the coast; and then Patty conceived the bold idea of rowing to the Towers. That would be a sure refuge, she knew; she fancied her pursuers would be searching the cavern, and so would not notice her passing Perrancove. When she saw the lights in the cottages and on the shore she was a little alarmed; for a moment she paused. Where should she go? Not out to sea; that would be certain death. Not back to the Witches' Hole, for there were her pursuers waiting to seize her! The only thing to do was to make for the Towers' Creek. And then came the struggle with current and tide, the slow conviction that she was not going the way she meant to, but every moment was drifting nearer Perrancove beach. She saw the crowds assemble; she watched the kindling of the bonfire; and soon she was near enough to recognize the faces of her pursuers. That was the crowning moment of her despair. An icy-cold shiver ran through her limbs; her arms dropped helpless by her sides; and only her skinny fingers still gripped the oars tenaciously.

The tide washed the *Triumph* in; three or four men dashed forward to haul her up, when suddenly a slight figure sprang in front of them and jumped into the boat with Patty.

It was Una. In a moment she had seized the oars from Patty's grasp, the boat shot out again into the water, but not before a hoarse, angry shout rose from the shore. When she was about a boat's length out she paused. She caught sight of boats being hurriedly dragged down to the water's edge. She knew that matters were serious, and, standing up, she confronted the angry crowd.

"Be quiet. I want to speak to you!" she said.

Something in her quiet, authoritative tone had the instant effect she desired. There was silence; the women elbowed their way down to the edge; the men looked up sullenly. It was a scene any artist would have wished to paint; for weirdness and beauty it could have no equal. It was a still night; only the ripple and swish of the waves against the low stone breakwater was to be heard. The ocean lay dark and silent in the background; the centre picture was the *Triumph*. Una stood up, the ruddy light from the bonfire shining full on her slight young supple figure. Her face was glowing and sparkling with eager earnestness and enthusiasm; her curly hair, escaping from under the woollen cap she wore, clustered round her brow in soft wavy tendrils; one hand was lifted to demand attention, the other was backing with an oar to keep the boat from drifting forward.

Crouched down by her side was Patty. Her grey hair was hanging loose and untidy round her withered face. A scarlet handkerchief knotted round her throat and a ragged blue apron gave a touch of colour to

her figure. Her restless black eyes were peering into the crowd in front of her. The firelight of the bonfire destined for her destruction played across her terror-stricken face. A black background; a ruddy foreground; youth and age; beauty and decay in close proximity. It was a scene long remembered by one who was even now hurrying towards it.

“Listen to me!”

Una's voice rang out as clear and sweet as a bell.

“You have thoughts of murder in your hearts to-night. I come to save you from such a crime. I have grown up amongst you. I love you all. I would save you, if I could, from the consequences of such a crime. I know what has angered you. It is not only poor old Patty here, who, if her son had lived, would have been lovingly housed and cared for, instead of being hooted from place to place by men and boys, who ought to know better. A poor old defenceless, grey-haired woman, daily growing feebler in mind and body, has become your object of hate and spite. And why? Because you ignorantly think that the boat I stand in, belongs to her! Take a good look at us, tell me if you have seen such a craft before? Does she look the work of witchcraft? Would you like to know her owner? I am she! Yes, you are astonished! I will take you into my confidence; I will talk to you like reasonable men and women. Long, long ago, when I was quite a little girl, I used to sob myself to sleep when the wind howled round the Towers, thinking of the poor

wrecked sailors. I often used to talk to some of you about them, and you used to laugh and turn the subject, as if the deaths of so many human beings mattered nothing to you. I listened one day to the talk of some visitors at the Towers. I heard the history of the destruction of a valuable lifeboat; and I made a vow to myself, then and there, that when I grew big I would build a lifeboat myself—a boat that would never be destroyed. That was when I was about ten years old. Ten years later I remembered my vow, and I set to work. I saved all the money I could, and invested in materials, and then I wondered where I could secrete them. I thought of the Witches' Hole, and I had them taken there. Little by little this boat that you see began to grow. It was slow work. It was only after I married that it proceeded more quickly. I was able to spend more on it, and I tell you, men, that it was my greatest joy in life when she was christened and launched. There isn't a foot in her that I have not helped to make. Every screw and bolt is known to me. She is dearer to me than anything else in the world. And this is what you call witchcraft!"

Una paused with a little catch in her breath.

The fishermen and women were gazing at her with open eyes and mouths. Their anger was dying away in the keen interest they felt in "Missy's" revelations.

"Now," went on Una, with a little enthusiasm in her tone, "my boat was made, but she wanted a crew. Who would come forward? I thought of you all one

by one. Martin, who gave me my first lesson in rowing; Luke, who helped me to catch my first fish; others who had delighted me when a child by their sea yarns—perhaps you wonder I did not come to you! Well—what reply would you have made me? Do you think my proposal would have been welcomed by you? Would you have all come forward bravely as a volunteer crew, and breasted the waves, and fought the storms, in order to save poor drowning men?”

A dead silence.

“I tell you—all of you—that I was ashamed to feel that I could not rely on your help. I was not sure of you, and so I fell back on the three that I knew I could trust.”

There was a low sullen murmur through the crowd.

“Yes, I know you hate them; you tried to drown one and murder two; you also tried to drown my husband, but God above has saved you from such crimes. I know all. I have seen ghastly sights on this shore—sights that have made my blood boil—only I was a helpless woman, and could see no way to remedy matters. A half-drowned man is better left to die if the spoils from off him enrich your pockets! Oh, men and lads! do you ever think of your hidden stores of riches, your secret piles of ill-gotten wealth, and tremble when you remember that a day of judgment is coming? Do you think that God looks down upon you, and knows all, and yet will pass it by? Has the love of money so taken possession of your

souls, that you are utterly deadened to all thoughts of the life beyond and to where you will spend eternity? But I am not here to preach. I am telling you the history of my lifeboat. You have seen her go out from the Witches' Hole and save lives; I have been proud and glad to be one of her crew on those occasions. If you had not wilfully maimed all her crew on one sad night, three of your own neighbors and kinsmen would be standing alive and strong with you to-night. We should have saved them, as well as the crew that picked them up. It is you Perrancove fishers who made three desolate widows then!"

The women alluded to gave a wailing kind of cry. Una continued—

"Yes, that seems terrible to you, I do believe! I have seen you risk your own lives for each other; I believe you would be honestly glad to see those poor men back amongst us again; but have you ever thought of the wives and sweethearts left sorrowing for those you have helped to kill? Have you ever thought of the broken hearts of the mothers whose only sons have been drowned for the want of a friendly hand? Just think for a moment! Take the last ten years—only ten years—I dare not think of a longer time. Imagine every drowned soul wrecked on these rocks close to us rising up from their watery grave and confronting you now. Can you fancy you see them? I can. Tall bonny lads, sons of loving mothers and proud fathers, weather-beaten sailors like yourselves, heads of families, leaving poverty-

stricken wives and children without a protector; delicate women; helpless baby children. Oh! can you see them rising now and saying, 'Why did you let us drown? Why did you not lift a hand to help us?' Can you see them by tens and twenties and hundreds rising up to condemn you? Do you know the name our bay deserves? 'Slaughter Bay.' Think it over, for it has been downright slaughter for the last hundred years or more. You know how many you could have saved, if you had wished to do so! You know how many you have seen drown. You have watched their death struggles with delight; you have stripped their poor bodies of everything that you think will bring you money? And what are you the better for it? Tell me, do you enjoy your riches? Is your secret hoard a delight to you? Or is it an anxious care? Now, what I have to ask you to-night is this. Will you alter the history of Slaughter Bay? Shall it be Rescue Bay in the future? You have hearts! You love your wives and little ones. Will you begin to think of the wives and little ones of others henceforth? Will you start afresh, and try to blot out the black past of Perrancove Bay? And oh, dear men,—and women too, for you know how you can help your husbands in this matter—if it means a ribbon or a trinket less, it will mean a life more—will you all remember that we are brothers and sisters, that we have a Father above—a Father who has made the sea and rules the waves, and loves every creature on and in it? We have a Savior who lived amongst fishers,

who chose them as His dearest friends, who wants to be their Friend still, day by day, hour by hour. I wish I could talk to you as Mr. McFarlane does. I know what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for me. This little boat I am standing in is a very poor type of what He is able to do for you. You are making shipwrecks of your souls, and He is the Lifeboat of the world. I found no real joy or peace till I stepped in. How many of you will step in too?"

Another silence, broken by the sobbing of some women. Una had reached the hearts of her audience, and she knew it.

Then she changed her tone.

"I will say no more. I have told you how this little boat has been built, with much hard work, with much prayer. I am going to leave her fate in your hands. I have shown you that poor old Patty has had nothing to do with her. She discovered what we were doing in the Witches' Hole; she knew an entrance to it from the cliffs above; and I suppose must have got down there when you were pursuing her, and rowed out to escape from you. I feel sure now you know the facts you will leave the poor old woman alone; but what are you going to do with my lifeboat? I am not going to hide her existence any longer. Shall she belong to every one of us? Shall she try to wipe out the stain upon us as a fishing population, and seek to rescue as many as have already perished through the lack of her? If you are willing, I will build a house for her on the beach here. My husband will help me.

We will ask for a volunteer crew. Will you take the same pride in her that we do? If you still wish her to be destroyed; if you want to see drowning men and women die before your eyes, and have not the humanity or pluck to rescue them, then say the word. I will cast her adrift now, and let the sea take her where she will; or I will bring her in and let you burn her in your bonfire. Which is it to be? Decide her fate. What is to become of the *Triumph*?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FISHERS' RESPONSE

“By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
And make persuasion do the work of fear.”

Milton.

The fishers were not long in making their decision. Old Martin had the honour of being first spokesman. He raised his cap and waved it wildly in the air.

“Three cheers for the Missy’s boat! Three cheers for the *Triumph*!”

The cheers were given with right good will. The Perrancove fishers were always moved by eloquence; they were carried away in this instance beyond Una’s wildest hopes. There was not a dissentient voice amongst them; the boat that had been the cause of so much anger and strife was now an object of reverence in their eyes. As with a few quick strokes Una came to shore, a crowd of then hauled the *Triumph* up on the beach, and she was besieged by the curious and interested onlookers.

But as Una stepped out a hand was laid on her shoulder, and she turned to see her husband.

“Oh, Cuthbert, you are back. Thank God. If only you had been here sooner!”

He was silent, and stepped back, as one by one some of the elder fishers came up to his wife.

She took each by the hand.

“You will stand by the *Triumph*? You will be her friends? God bless you! Martin, I leave her in your charge to-night. Fasten her to the breakwater. I trust her to you all.”

She passed through them rapidly, holding poor old Patty by the hand. The men were some of them wiping their eyes with their coatcuffs; the women sobbing audibly. They were an impressionable lot, but never in the memory of the oldest inhabitant there had there been such a scene. Kathie came forward with her eyes full of fervour. She volunteered to house old Patty for the night, for the poor old woman seemed to be fast collapsing.

“Oh, Missy, to think my Jim has not heard you!” she exclaimed.

Una smiled, but could say nothing. She took her husband's arm, and he felt her lean heavily on him, but not a word did either of them say till they had reached the Towers.

Cuthbert was dumbfounded by it all. He had arrived home to be told by Baldwin hurriedly—

“Oh, master, there be terrible doin's on the beach! Jim Tanner's wife have been up to fetch the mistress down. They 'm goin' to burn old Patty Jessop for a witch. Their bloods be up, and they 'm terrible savage!”

He had dashed down in time for the opening of

Una's speech, and had listened to every word of it; bewilderment, astonishment, and admiration succeeding rapidly in his mind. Was this his thoughtless child-wife? He stood in the background listening spellbound. And as he now walked home with her he dared not trust himself to speak.

He took her into the dining-room, where there was a blazing fire, and then he faced her.

"Una!"

She looked up. Already she was feeling the reaction from the intense strain she had passed through. The colour was ebbing from her cheeks and lips, but she laid her hands on her husband's arm imploringly.

"Do not be angry with me, Cuthbert. I wanted to tell you. I meant to do so."

"Angry!" repeated Cuthbert mechanically.

She misunderstood his silence, and burst into a passion of tears. He took her into his arms at once.

There was no small-mindedness in Cuthbert's nature. If for an instant he regretted his wife's want of confidence in him, the real facts filled him with gladness and delight.

"Angry with you!" he exclaimed passionately. "My darling, I feel it is an honour to belong to you, to be your husband! I would not have missed what I have seen and heard to-night for worlds!"

Then in quieter tones he tried to soothe her. He ordered a cup of coffee to be brought to her, which he insisted that she should take.

"You must not talk. The best thing for you is sleep. You will feel better to-morrow."

Una struggled for self-control; but she felt unstrung and exhausted, and wisely took his advice. Just as she was dropping off to sleep she turned to Mrs. Craven, who had been waiting upon her.

"Just ask your master to come to me."

Cuthbert obeyed the summons at once.

"Tell me, Cuthbert, will the temptation be too much for them? I have left the *Triumph* in their hands entirely."

"You could not have ensured her safety better."

She smiled, and was asleep almost directly.

Perrancove meanwhile was almost beside itself with excitement. Perhaps Una's success would not have been so complete had not Donald McFarlane's teaching found its way into many a heart. For some time past many of the fishers had been uncomfortable and ill at ease; but the habits of a lifetime are not easily broken, and wrecks with their salvage were their delight and joy. Martin was the one that was conquered first, and now he was loud in Una's praise.

"I never seed a maid nor a wife her ekal yet! Ay, boys! Were her not gran' wi' such a tongue, standin' there like a beast at bay!"

"Nay, there were not much of the beast in she!" laughed a younger man; "'tis an angel 'ce be meanin'! Her be a wiman wi' a wunnerfu' head and han' an undestandin'! To think that her did build yon life-boat be remarkable!"

“Ay, ’tis such a tidy little craft! But they Tanners be clever wi’ they han’s, though I never giveth ’un credit for a work like to she!”

“Well-a-day! The times be goin’ to change, surely! ’Tis the lasses now be heads. well over the men! Such a feat I hath never heard tell on! An’ her have gone out an’ weathered the storms whilst us hath stayed to home. I allus did say Missy were a rare ’un.”

Some of the old ones went into the “Blue Lobster” to drink the health of the *Triumph*, and there was a little bemoaning over the good old times that were gone.

“But there!” exclaimed one, “I did see they drownin’ sperrits from the deep as Missy did talk! An’ I be fair scared and wisht! Her did speak right at we, an’ there be no wi’standin’ she! I mind her as a tiny maid, her were allays that way! An’ I standeth by she now an’ will take an oar so soon as her asketh of me, for I knoweth a well-built craft when I seeth one!”

Early the next morning Una was summoned to Kathie’s cottage. Poor old Patty lay on the bed breathing her last. The fright had been too much for her; she raised her eyes feebly when Una bent over her.

“I be a carried in to shore wunnerful easy,” she murmured; and as she closed her eyes for the last time Una prayed that the poor clouded soul might truly be landed safely on the shore that knows no

storms, where the understanding is never darkened, and the fools are wise indeed.

She returned to the Towers saddened yet comforted by such thoughts.

“And now, my little wife,” said Cuthbert to her that morning, “may I ask why I was kept in the dark about this work of yours?”

Una looked into his eyes frankly.

“I will tell you all. At first you were not interested in the sea and in the fishers. You were too busy with your book, and then I got accustomed to keeping it from you. Afterwards—especially since your return to me—I longed to tell you. I nearly did so often; but I was afraid you would not let me go out on stormy nights. I loved that too much to give it up, so I put off confession. This is my secret, Cuthbert; I told you I had one.”

“I am dimly beginning to understand so much,” said Cuthbert. “Tell me more; tell me every detail.”

And so, sitting down by her husband's side, Una told him all, with no reservations. He heard of that dreadful night when he was absent and when his wife herself had not been left unmolested; he listened to the account of the different rescues the *Triumph* had effected, to Donald McFarlane's determination to discover the mystery surrounding the Witches' Hole, and of his consequent enlightenment; and his heart swelled with love and pride as he thought of his wife.

“I thought you were playing with life,” he acknowl-

edged; "I imagined myself the benefiter of mankind when I ushered my ancient discoveries into the literary world. I was working to supply the needs of a few savants' brains; you were working to save perishing souls."

Una grew uneasy under such praise.

"Do you know, I cannot bear the thought that I am to be one of the *Triumph's* crew no longer? Must I give up all part and lot in her?"

Then Cuthbert said the best thing he could have said.

"Let us come down to the shore and organize her captain and crew. We must strike while the iron is hot. We can settle the spot where the *Triumph* is to be kept and set the men to work at once to build a house for her."

They went down and spent two or three hours in plans and discussions about the Perrancove lifeboat, plans which were formulated and carried out with wonderful promptness and success.

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It is a year later. Two young mothers are looking down with joy and pride upon two bonny boys playing together. They are Una and Kathie. As girls they shared each other's joys and sorrows; as wives and mothers they do so still

Una is developing into a sweet and gracious woman. Her old impetuosity breaks out occasionally, but it is tempered with a thoughtful gentleness that the birth of her boy has created. A shadow rests on her face now as she draws out a letter from her pocket.

“You knew him and loved him, Kathie. I will read it to you. It is from the captain of the ship they were returning in. My father is too unnerved by the shock to tell us the details, so I am thankful to have the letter. It is to my husband.

“DEAR SIR,—I regret extremely to have to tell you of the sad event that has just occurred on my ship, viz., the sudden death of the Rev. Donald McFarlane. Mr. Carteret does not seem to know about his friends, so I am writing to ask if you will kindly break the tidings to them. We encountered a stiff gale last Thursday night, and it took some of our passengers by surprise. Mr. Carteret was sitting on deck, and endeavoured to make his way back to his cabin. In doing so, in some way that we cannot account for, he missed his footing and a sudden lurch of the vessel sent him overboard. McFarlane instantly plunged over after him. I lowered a boat, and Mr. Carteret was handed in, but owing to the heavy swell McFarlane was carried out beyond our reach. His body was finally recovered, but life was extinct when he was rescued. We all mourn our loss in him. He was the life of the ship, and brought

sunshine wherever he went—a true, noble Christian man, and one whose example we may well seek to follow.

“I remain,

“Yours faithfully,

“JOHN WELLS,

“Capt. ss. *Majestic*.”

There was silence after she had read it. After a few moments she said—

“He lived for others and he died for them. I cannot tell you what I feel about him, Kathie. I can never thank him enough through all eternity for the change in my father. He is a different man. I have no fears for him now. Mr. McFarlane stuck to him till he saw him safely landed in the Lifeboat. He will be taken gently home in it, for his health is fast breaking up. I have wondered why God took the young strong life and left the old decrepit one, but I fancy it was to show us that when his earthly keeper was taken from him my father would still be held up by his heavenly one. He has learnt that he has a Savior that keeps as well as saves. That is the greatest truth of all, Kathie, is it not? And Mr. McFarlane has not stopped his work; he is doing the will of God above in His presence instead of down here below, that is all.”

“I do not wonder,” said Kathie thoughtfully, as she looked at the bonny boy clutching hold of his

mother's dress, "that you have called your baby 'Donald McFarlane.' "

Una had tears in her eyes as she lifted her little one into her arms.

"I meant him to be a sailor," she said, pressing her lips against the golden curls, "but my husband chose his name, and being the namesake of such a man, I shall pray that he may follow in his steps and be one of God's chosen messengers."

The boy grew up to fulfil his mother's desire, but from his infancy the sea and its surroundings filled his heart and soul, and there was one story that he never tired of hearing from his father's lips.

"Tell me about mother's lifeboat, Dad, and that night when the old woman was nearly burnt to death."

So Cuthbert would tell the tale, and would picture the scene on that still night in October when a young girl fearlessly stood up to quell the rage and wrath of the whole population of Perrancove, and with straight and simple eloquence turned the minds and purposes of the superstitious fishers from violence and robbery to the noble work of rescuing their fellow-creatures from the perils of the coast.

FINIS